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Ralph Milne Farley

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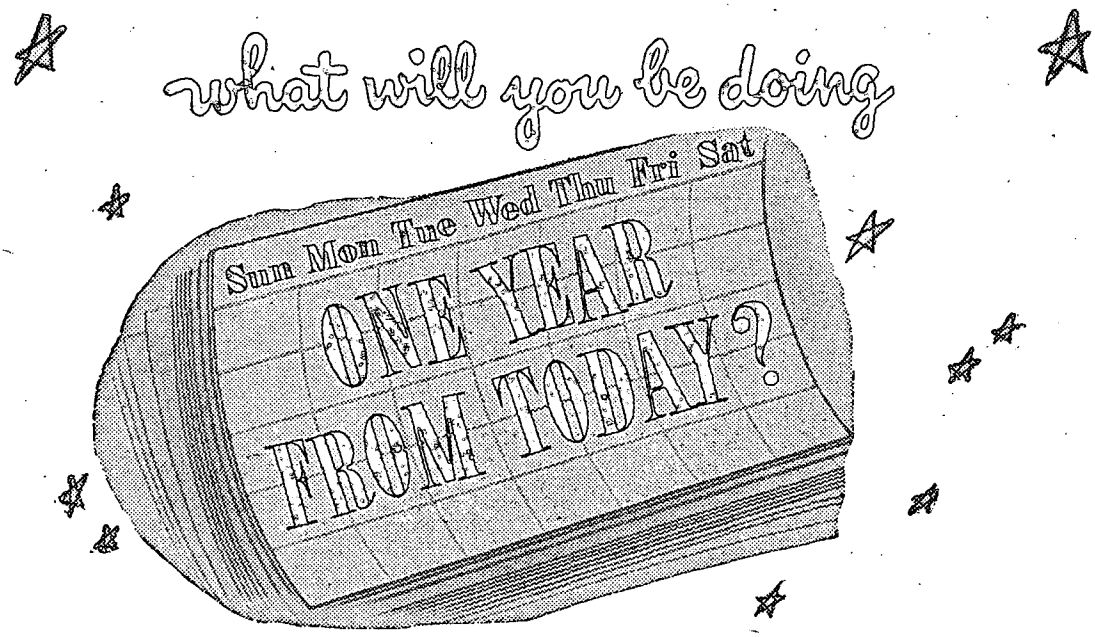

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Fantastic Novels

Magazine

Vol. 1 JANUARY, 1941 No. 4

Complete Book-Length Novel

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THE SHIP THAT DIED.....John DeWitt Gilbert 118

Fear struck the hearts of all who encountered the blinking lights of the ghost ship Carnivordshire

Special Features

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WHAT DO YOU THINK?..... 124

The March 1941 FANTASTIC NOVELS will be on sale January 15, featuring that great Merritt classic, "The Dwellers in the Mirage"

A **RED STAR** *Magazine*

THE FRANK A. MUNSEY COMPANY, Publisher, 280 Broadway, NEW YORK, N. Y.

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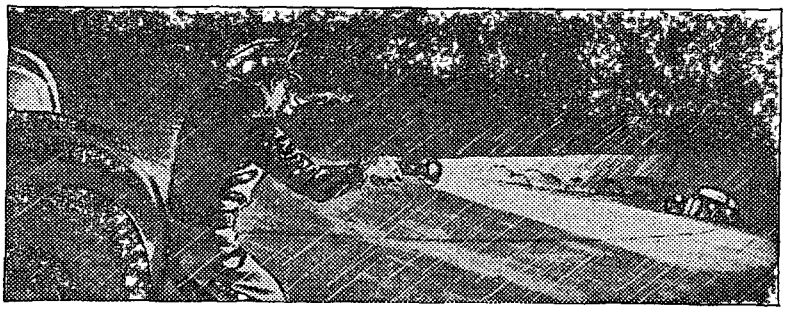

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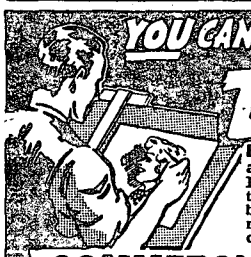

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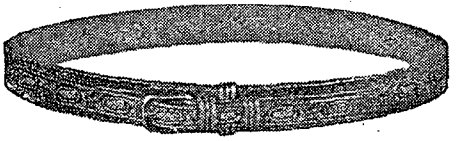

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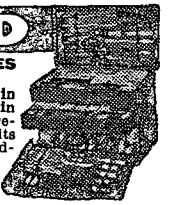

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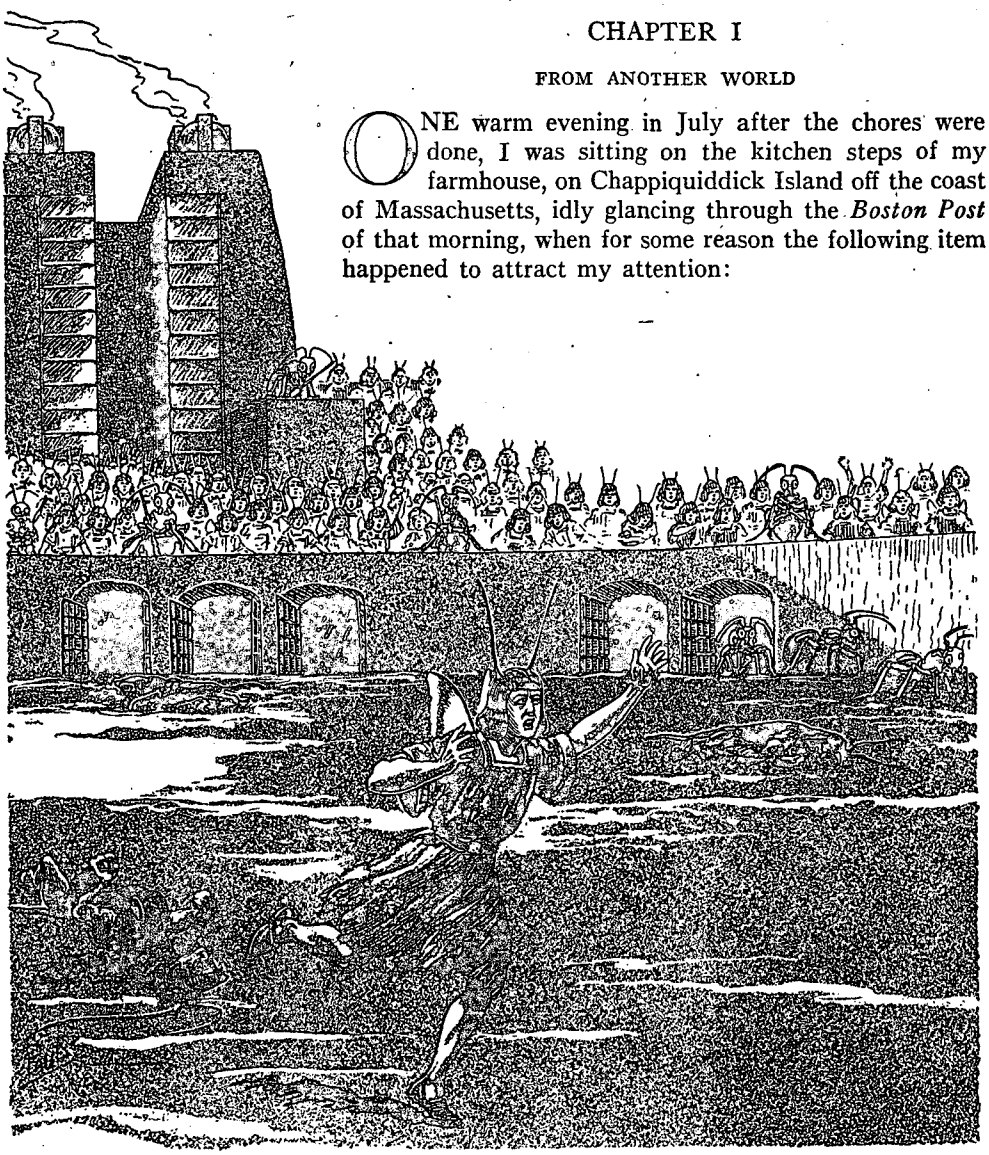
The Radio Beasts

By RALPH MILNE FARLEY

A novel complete in itself, relating Myles Cabot's adventures on the fantastic planet Venus, in which the events leading up to the present story are run over quickly for the benefit of those who did not read of Cabot's first accidental transmission to the other planet in "The Radio Man"



CHAPTER I

FROM ANOTHER WORLD

ONE warm evening in July after the chores were done, I was sitting on the kitchen steps of my farmhouse, on Chappiquiddick Island off the coast of Massachusetts, idly glancing through the *Boston Post* of that morning, when for some reason the following item happened to attract my attention:

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MADMAN TERRORIZES G. E. PLANT IN LYNN

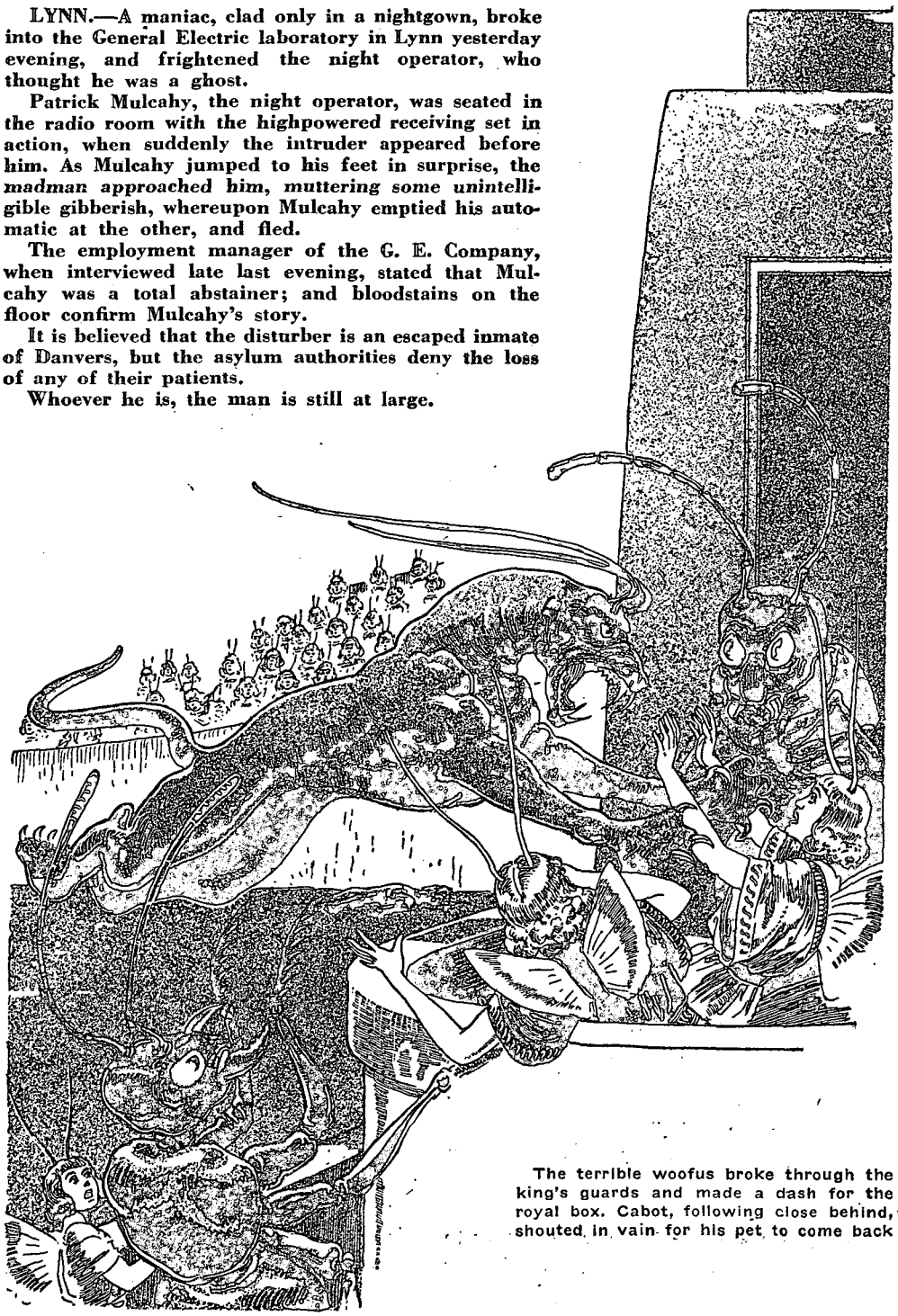
LYNN.—A maniac, clad only in a nightgown, broke into the General Electric laboratory in Lynn yesterday evening, and frightened the night operator, who thought he was a ghost.

Patrick Mulcahy, the night operator, was seated in the radio room with the highpowered receiving set in action, when suddenly the intruder appeared before him. As Mulcahy jumped to his feet in surprise, the madman approached him, muttering some unintelligible gibberish, whereupon Mulcahy emptied his automatic at the other, and fled.

The employment manager of the G. E. Company, when interviewed late last evening, stated that Mulcahy was a total abstainer; and bloodstains on the floor confirm Mulcahy's story.

It is believed that the disturber is an escaped inmate of Danvers, but the asylum authorities deny the loss of any of their patients.

Whoever he is, the man is still at large.



The terrible woofus broke through the king's guards and made a dash for the royal box. Cabot, following close behind, shouted in vain for his pet to come back

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"Such a clumsy fabrication," thought I. "It is too bad that the *Boston Post* has fallen so low as to print such an old, old gag."

Then I laid down the paper, and let my mind wander as it willed. The episode which I had just read had occurred in the *radio* room of the General Electric Company. Radio! That word suggested to me the greatest radio genius whom I have ever known: Myles Standish Cabot, of Boston.

He had been a classmate, and friend of mine. He had mysteriously disappeared from his laboratory on Beacon Street, and nothing further had been heard of him until one night four years later, when a hollow projectile had dropped from the sky onto my farm, bearing in its interior a holographic account of my friend's adventure during the preceding four years.

This story I had edited, and it appeared under the title "The Radio Man." It related how Myles, while experimenting with the wireless transmission of matter, had accidentally projected himself through space to the planet Venus. This accounted for his mysterious disappearance.

He had found the planet inhabited by a race of human-like creatures—called Cupians—with antennae instead of ears, who were living in slavery under the Formians, a gigantic breed of intelligent black ants. Myles Cabot had devised artificial electrical antennae, so as to be able to talk with both races, and had organized the Cupians, and led them to victory over their oppressors, thereby winning an honored position among them, and the hand of their princess, the lovely Lilla.

Strange that a news item about a crazy man in a nightgown should have reminded me of such a staid and proper person as Cabot! It would not have done so, but for the one word "radio."

Then I dismissed the whole matter from my mind.

THE next evening I ran my car over to the point, and rowed across the harbor to the village to get a small shipment of freight which was expected by the late boat.

Meeting the boat is one of the chief summer diversions of us Edgartonions. We line up on each side of the gang plank, and let the arriving summer folk run the gantlet of our scrutiny, and listen (ourselves amused) at their amused comments on the "natives."

As I stood thus on the evening in question, watching the summer folk walk the plank, I saw among them a strangely familiar face. Could it be? It was none other than my old classmate Myles S. Cabot! In another moment we were shaking hands.

Yet still I was speechless with astonishment. Cabot was the last person in the world that I would have expected to see. I had thought he was on another planet, millions of miles away.

Then came the reaction. If Cabot was still on earth, his story about his adventures on Venus, which I had so recently published to the world, must be nothing but a cleverly concocted lie. The projectile, which had carried the manuscript to my farm, and which I had ingenuously assumed to have been shot from the skies, may merely have been fired over from somewhere on Cap Cod.

The accident of my finding the message had probably not been chance at all, but rather an event planned and intended by Myles Cabot. He had hoaxed me, and I had passed on to the editor and to the unsuspected general public, a mere faked-up yarn. Think what a position this would place me in, when the editor, who in good faith had accepted my story as a narrative of fact, should discover that Myles was not on Venus at all! Could I ever make any one believe I had been innocent of complicity in this hoax?

I was horrified, and my resentment flared up at my old friend.

"Where have you been all these years since you disappeared from home?" I asked accusingly.

"Why, you know perfectly well," was his surprised reply, "for you published my account of it."

"Then what on earth are you doing here?" I countered.

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To which he enigmatically answered: "Great are the powers of radio."

"Were you really on Venus?" I inquired, still incredulous.

"On my word of honor as a gentleman," said he, solemnly.

So the story was true after all, and I had not been hoaxed. I heaved a sigh of relief.

It was soon arranged that he should return with me to the farm. Forgotten was my freight, as I hurried him to the dory.

As I helped him into the boat, I noticed that his left hand was bandaged, and asked him why.

"It happened night before last," he answered laconically. "Man shot at me."

And not another word would he speak until the dory was tied to its stake on the other side of the harbor, and we were chugging along the red road which runs east across Chappaquiddick.

"Now tell me all about it," I begged. "How did you ever get back to earth, and how did you happen to come down here?"

Myles replied, "This is the way it was: After our conquest of the ant-men, I resumed my experiments with the wireless transmission of matter, which experiments had been so rudely interrupted by my accidentally transmitting myself to the planet Poros—Venus, as you earth-folk call it.

"I not only perfected the device, but also perfected it in such a way that it could be used as an attachment to a certain common sort of high-power hook-up. Now, before I left the earth, I knew that the General Electric Company at Lynn had a hook-up of this kind in a receiving station which was in almost constant operation, and was such a standard installation that there was practically no chance of its not being still in commission. I happened to remember its wave-length. So I adjusted my apparatus in my electrical laboratory on Poros, with two Cupian friends at the levers; and the next thing I knew, I found myself back on earth, lying on the floor of a room, in front of a radio set.

"There was a man seated near by, the first human being whom I had seen in over five earth-years. I rushed to greet him, and to ask him where I was. But probably, in my haste, I spoke to him in the language of Poros. That, and my Cupian toga, must have surprised him, for he fired several shots at me with an automatic, and then turned and bolted through the door. One of his shots nicked my left hand. Luckily, the rest missed me."

"Then you are the supposed madman of Lynn!" I exclaimed.

"The very same," he answered.

"Well, well!" said I. "Who would have guessed it? And yet, as I read the story in the *Boston Post*, it somehow or other made me think of you."

Myles laughed. "Not very complimentary. They certainly gave me a weird write-up."

"They certainly did," I replied. "But tell me, how did you get rid of your night-gown?"

Myles laughed again. "My toga, you mean? I found a suit of overalls, an old hat, and a pair of shoes in a locker, put them on, and made my escape from the building. In one of the pockets there was some small change, which carried me to Boston.

"The reason I happened to be here is because yesterday I ran across an installment of 'The Radio Man,' which showed me for the first time that my story had actually reached the earth. I was glad indeed, and determined to look you up at once. So to-day I caught the afternoon boat, and here I am.

"Three days ago I was king on Poros. To-day I am nobody, incognito, and in hiding, on the planet Earth, millions of miles away." And he shrugged his shoulders.

"But, Myles," said I, "tell me how you came to leave Venus. You talk as though you just calmly up and left for no reason whatever. Why didn't you bring the Princess Lilla with you? The last that I knew, according to that manuscript which you shot from the skies, you and she had been married in state, and Cupia had settled down to an era of peace, freedom, and prosperity."

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Myles smiled wanly. "You would hardly guess that my silver planet has since then run crimson with blood, so as to rival even her red brother, Mars."

"How did it ever happen?" I asked.

"You must remember that Prince Yuri of Cupia, the traitorous friend of the oppressor ants, was still unaccounted for at the close of the War of Liberation. Also that there remained alive on our continent, crowded behind a new pale it is true, but chafing under defeat, and eager for *revanche,* a still numerous nation of ants, headed by a newly-hatched queen, who was but putty in the hands of veteran Formian statesmen. What better combination of match and powder-magazine could be imagined, to threaten the peace of a planet!"

Myles had just completed this long harangue, when we turned into the gate of the farm; and I was soon introducing him to Mrs. Farley and the rest of the household. You can imagine how thrilled they were to meet, in the flesh, the author and hero of those adventures on the planet Venus, which they had read and reread so many times, and how eager they were to hear more.

"Did the match reach the powder?" asked Mrs. Farley anxiously. "Did Prince Yuri get his revenge?"

"Listen," Cabot replied, "and I will tell you all about it."

So, far into the night we sat, while our guest roughly sketched the events which had occurred since he shot the manuscript of his previous adventures earthward. The details, he filled in for us from time to time during his stay at our farm. I took copious notes; and, now that he is gone, I have—with his permission—written up the story in as nearly as possible his own words, and herein give it to the world.

CHAPTER II

THE MATCH AND THE POWDER

THIS is the story told us by Myles Cabot, the radio man.

You will remember that a treaty had been concluded early in the year 359 with the defeated ant empire, whereby a new pale was set up many miles to the south of the old, which had formerly served as the boundary between Cupia and Formia. Behind this new pale were crowded the remnants of the once great race of Formians. Cupia was at last free from a domination which had lasted for five hundred years.

So, for nearly two years thereafter, Cupia had prospered.

Myles Cabot, the radio genius, lived in the palace of King Kew, with the lovely princess whom he had won as a bride, Lilla, fairest of all the women of Cupia. White skinned she was, with rose-petal cheeks. Her eyes were sapphire-blue, and her short curly hair was the color of spun gold. Slim she was, and lithe as a fairy, which resemblance was enhanced by two tiny iridescent wings upon her back, and two butterfly-antennae which projected from her forehead. These wings and antennae were features common to all of her race; but the other distinguishing Cupian characteristics, namely, the extra finger on each hand (which led them to count by twelves, instead of by tens as we do), the extra toe on each foot, and the total lack of ears, you never would notice.

Her earthman husband had so perfected the radio-set (which he always carried as a means of communication with her and her people), that no one would ever suspect him of not being a veritable Cupian himself. His hair was trimmed so as to conceal his ears and the tiny earphones therein. His microphone was located between his collar bones, where it was effectively hidden by the neck-band of his toga. His batteries, bulbs, and controls were on a belt worn next to his skin. Artificial wings were fastened to his back, and artificial antennae projected from his forehead. So that only a very close examination of his hands or his bare feet would ever betray him as a creature of a race different from that now dominant on the planet.

Now that Cupia no longer had to supply slaves to Formia, the Cupians soon found that their customary four hours a

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day work produced much more than was needed for all the useful purposes of their empire, and accordingly Cabot persuaded King Kew to undertake a series of public works, the first of which was to be a huge stadium for the holding of games.

The new stadium had been completed shortly before Peace Day in the year three hundred and fifty-ten, and the Peace Day exercises were held there, instead of on the plaza of Kuana as heretofore. This was particularly appropriate, for the stadium had been built on the exact spot where had occurred the first clash between the Formians and the Cupians at the beginning of the War of Liberation two years before.

The golden-haired Lilla was unable to be present, for she was expecting a child. So she was safely ensconced in her castle at Lake Luno, a thousand stads to the north of Kuana.

Cabot and she hoped for a boy. They hoped this with more than the conventional fervor, for their son would be Crown Prince of Cupia, thus supplanting the renegade Prince Yuri, whose whereabouts had been unknown since the war. The birth of a son to the Princess Lilla would mean the end of the menace of the possibility of Yuri succeeding the throne on the death of King Kew, and bringing back the ants with him. It is true that the Assembly had cancelled his title as crown prince, and had awarded the succession to his younger brother, the loyal Prince Toron; but most Cupians doubted the legality of this procedure.

Myles would have been at Lake Luno with his wife, had it not been for the fact that his position as Minister of Play in the Royal Cabinet absolutely required his presence at the exercises. In addition, he was to shoot on one of the competing revolver teams, which were to furnish part of the entertainment. So he had made—literally—a flying trip from Lake Luno, arriving at Kuana just in time for the performance.

Formia, the ant-nation, had been invited to send a delegation, but had declined. Who can blame them, considering that the occasion was to commemorate their downfall? So the program went on without the ants, and the stand reserved for them remained vacant, although the rest of the huge amphitheater was jammed with some fifty thousand enthusiastic Cupians.

The weather could not have been finer. The air was warm, fragrant, hot-house scented, and fanned by gentle zephyrs; for the prevailing winds, which blow ever toward the boiling seas, were less strong than usual. Above, at a far height, shone the silver clouds which always surround the planet, to shield it from the intense heat of the sun. The light, diffused by these clouds, shed a soft radiance over the scene below, transforming the gay coloring of the Cupian togas into delicate pastel shades. The day was typical of Porovian weather at its best, not at all the proper setting for the ominous events which were impending, all unforeseen by the holiday throng.

The exercises commenced by a young boy from the Kuana public schools reciting the king's famous address which had opened the war of two years ago.

Next came the speech of welcome, but just as King Kew arose to broadcast his remarks, a messenger arrived from the nearest radio station to announce that one of the government planes had been sighted, displaying signals to the effect that it was carrying a delegation from Formia.

So Queen Formis had decided to be represented after all!

Scarce had this news been received, when the plane itself appeared, and soon settled softly into the middle of the arena. Thereat there was much waving of the red pennant of Cupia from the stands, and even a few of the black pennants of Formia showed themselves. Cabot vaguely wondered how any of his people had happened to bring with them the flag of their late enemies. But doubtless it was just so as to be prepared to receive politely such a visitation as this.

Out of the airship disembarked an officer of the Cupian air navy, and four ant men. It was over a year since Cabot had

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seen one of these creatures, who once had been his only companions, and he noted with surprise that they now seemed almost as strange to his eye as they had on his first day on this planet. Huge shiny black ants they were, the size of horses, with no other adornment than their green folding umbrellas slung at their sides, in readiness for use if the blasting sunlight should happen to shine through a rift in the silver clouds, and the white paint-marks on their backs giving their own serial numbers and the numbers of their fellow countrymen whom they had killed in the duels so common among them.

Three of them had the trim shipshape look of members of the Formian aristocracy, and the fourth was very old—as indicated by the quantity of duel numbers which he bore—and walked with difficulty.

SIDE by side the ants approached the foot of the throne and made obeisance to the king, a pleasing sight indeed to those who had long been accustomed to see Cupia bow before Formis! Then one of their delegation sent up a scroll of parchment by a page. Kew's brow darkened as he read it to himself.

Finally Kew spoke.

"One of your requests is impossible," he thundered. "Prince Yuri is a traitor. If we had been sure he were still alive, his surrender to us would have been one of the conditions of the treaty. Now that you have revealed his whereabout, know you that Cupia will consider no propositions from Formis until Yuri is in our hands. I have spoken."

Then suddenly the eyes of the whole multitude shifted from their ruler to the aged ant man. To the horror of all, the entire upper half of his body was opening as if on a hinge! And in the cavity thus exposed, there lay a Cupian! The aged ant man had not been an ant man at all, but merely a clever piece of mechanism, like the wooden horse at Troy.

The Cupian now sprang to his feet and approached the throne. It was Prince Yuri himself!

"Is that so, my uncle?" he shouted. "Know then that Yuri is no traitor, but rather is King of Poros!"

And before any one could interfere, the prince had drawn his revolver and fired, and the beloved King Kew the Twelfth had fallen with a bullet through his heart. Instantly a cheer arose, and from one end of that huge forum to the other, there were flung out, not the red pennant of the Kew dynasty, but rather the yellow pennant of Prince Yuri and the black pennant of the ants. A few red flags fluttered pitiably, but the administration was outnumbered two to one. Quite evidently the stadium had been packed. Yuri, the traitor and outcast, at one stroke had become King of Cupia.

So this was the situation of the match and the powder: Kew the Twelfth lying on the floor of the royal box, his noble heart stilled forever; Yuri, his nephew, the traitor to Cupia and friend of the ants, standing over the body, with a smoking revolver in his hand; Myles Cabot and the others of Kew's cabinet and retinue transfixed by horror; and a vast majority of the huge concourse proclaiming the assassin as their new king!

What irony of fate that firearms, which had been unknown on Poros until the earthman had introduced them for the overthrow of the ants, should now be employed to confound the earthman himself and to restore the ants to power! Well, he, too, was armed. As Field Marshal of Cupia, he determined that Kew's death must be avenged. So he, too, drew his revolver and fired at the renegade prince.

But, as he did this, Hah Babbuh, his own Chief of Staff and friend, struck his hand aside so that the bullet missed its mark.

"Fool!" hissed Hah. "It is death to offer violence to your king."

"But is not that what Yuri has just done?" Cabot replied. "Then why should not he suffer the penalty?"

"Because Yuri was crown prince when he fired the shot," Hah explained, "hence that very crime which killed his uncle,

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made him king, and thus immune to punishment."

But Cabot had to have the last word. "In that case, had we not better page Prince Toron, who is next in the line of succession?"

In a moment he was sorry he had spoken. During this brief conversation, the new king had been standing with his arms folded, and a sneer on his handsome face. But now he became visibly agitated.

"Good Builder!" he exclaimed. "I had forgotten about my brother. A full sarkarship and complete immunity to whoever brings me his head."

"But, sire," one of Yuri's henchmen interposed, "there be those who say that the death of Kew makes thy brother king, and not thee."

"The Valley to whoever says it from now on!" was Yuri's curt reply.

Those around him blanched with horror at the mention of this most terrible of all Porovian punishments, the Valley of the Howling Rocks, where condemned criminals are confined until the terrific din drives them mad, and they perish.

All this took place in much less time than is required for the telling of it. Meanwhile a bodyguard of the yellow faction had gathered about Yuri, and had disarmed and handcuffed Myles Cabot and all the other occupants of the royal box. Another bodyguard was protecting the three ant men down in the arena.

Yuri now addressed Hah Babbuh: "For saving my life, professor, you have my gratitude, though I realize that you were not actuated by any regard for *me*."

"Your majesty is correct as to that," said the Babbuh with dignity.

"We will let that pass," continued Yuri, "and, for your services, you can have the posts of Field Marshal and Secretary of Play, which are soon to become vacated." He cast a meaning glance in Cabot's direction.

But Hah, still with dignity, declined the honor.

Meanwhile the Kew faction in the audience had gradually been coming to their senses. You will remember that Cabot's own athletic club was to compete in the pistol shooting. There now ensued a few moments of consultation among their officers, and then they charged the bodyguard of the three ant men. In this they were joined by most of the competing club.

Although outnumbered, these men were all armed and were all crack shots. How Cabot wished that they were equipped with the explosive bullets which had been used in the late war. But, even as it was, they wrought frightful havoc, and soon Cabot saw the three ants go down.

Meanwhile most of the unarmed members of the audience were crowding out of the stadium, the ladies putting up their umbrellas as though that would protect them from the flying bullets, which already had taken a toll of several of their number. Then Yuri and his escort dragged their prisoners to one of the exits, and Myles saw no more of the fighting within the stadium.

Hah was still kept prisoner, in spite of having incurred the gratitude of the new king. He had had his chance, but had preferred to side with Cabot. What other alternative, then, than to incarcerate him!

The scene into which they emerged was equally turbulent. Cupian men and women were pouring out of all the exits and streaming across the plain toward the city; and it was evident that, when all these faction-crazed individuals reached their quarters and got hold of their rifles, hell would break loose in Kuana.

AS YURI and his captives proceeded toward the capital city, Cabot heard a sound to the southward. So, straining his manacled hands as far to one side as he could, he switched off his receiving set. This set existed for the purpose of enabling the earthman to hear the radiated speech of the Cupians. But, when he wished to listen to some *real* sound, he could do it far better with his set turned off.

There could be no doubt as to the sound which he now heard. It was the Cupian air-fleet from Wautoosa. Now, indeed, the

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tables would be turned on Prince Yuri!

And, to add to Cabot's joy, the remnants of his own hundred now fought its way out of the exit, and pursued King Yuri and his captives across the plain.

The fleet flew low in bombing formation; and, as they drew near, the occupants of the leading planes finally became visible. Cabot strained his eyes to try and recognize some of the well-known leaders of the Cupian air navy. Nearer and nearer drew the planes. More and more distinct became the occupants. Cabot thrilled at the thought that in a few minutes, with the aid of his loyal navy, he would be in control of the situation once more, and the renegade Prince Yuri would be at his mercy.

But alas, his joy was short-lived. Horrors! Every ship was manned by ants!

Cabot's hundred noticed his, too, just in time; for, even as they scattered, a bomb dropped from the point plane and exploded in their midst. Yuri was in control of the air. All was over.

It afterward transpired that while most of the personnel of the Cupian air navy had been on leave to attend the games at Kuana, it had been an easy matter for a handful of supporters of the renegade prince to seize Wautoosa, and to dispatch the planes at once to Formia to load them up with ant men. There were still living south of the pale enough members of the old ant air navy to pilot the entire fleet.

The return to Kuana from the stadium was devoid of further event, and the once glorious cabinet and generals of King Kew were soon safely locked up in the mangool.

Poblath the mango, Cabot's old friend Poblath, presently appeared, having returned from the stadium. To Cabot's surprise, Poblath gloated over him.

"Aha!" he exclaimed. "I have long awaited this day. You won Bthuh away from me, and then cast her aside. You thought that I had forgotten or forgiven, but you were mistaken. A Poblath never forgets nor forgives. 'Forgiveness is the folly of weaklings, who would trade honor for peace.'"

Ever the philosopher!

Poblath continued: "Now I shall take away your electrical antennae, for this time the king will rule that this is lawful."

He looked inquiringly at Yuri, who nodded in reply.

In permitting Poblath to remove Cabot's radio set, the new king was violating one of the most solemn laws of the kingdom. It was unlawful to deprive any Cupian, or even Formian, of his antennae.

The origin of this rule was shrouded in antiquity. It was generally supposed that the rule was merely humanitarian, based upon the fact that it would be a most cruel and unusual punishment to make a deaf-mute out of a person, thus cutting him off from all communication with his fellow beings, except by pad and stylus. But a more probable explanation is that deprivation of antennae would be an incentive to crime of the worst sort, for a person who had been so treated was rendered immune from death in the Valley of the Howling Rocks, a punishment reserved solely for the worst criminals.

Once before, early in Cabot's stay on Poros, Yuri had tried to take away his headset, but had been blocked by a ruling of King Kew. But now there was no one to say him nay.

Cabot was astounded, not at Yuri, but rather at Poblath. Was this the friend with whom Lilla and he had played ming-dah night after night? Had his friendship merely been a thing of expediency?

Cabot had once been Poblath's friend, and then his enemy, and then his friend, and now his enemy again. Yuri had once been Poblath's enemy, and was now his friend. Always Poblath had played in with the upper dog. It certainly looked as though he were a base opportunist, for all his philosophy.

As Myles formulated these cynical thoughts, Poblath's eye, on the side farthest from King Yuri, closed slowly and flickered spasmodically. It was the American wink, which Cabot had taught him. The earthman began to understand.

Then Poblath stepped close and, just as he snatched the apparatus roughly from

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Cabot's head, he radiated softly into Cabot's antennae: "Your belongings will be safe in my office."

Then Poblath withdrew, carefully carrying Cabot's radio set, and leaving his assistant Trisp in charge. The captives were locked in cells, Hah Babbuh and Cabot together; and the new king departed, presumably to take charge of the palace from which he had been exiled so long. Poblath thoughtfully provided Myles with a stylus and some paper; for writing with one's hands shackled behind one's back was possible, although difficult.

THE city remained comparatively quiet the rest of the day. Through the bars of the cell windows the prisoners could see down into the street below. All afternoon long, ant-fighters marched by, in detachments, on their way to the capitol. Gradually there were fewer and fewer Cupians to be seen in the open, as ant policemen took over the patrolling of the streets. Evidently Yuri did not trust even the faction which had put him in power. So Cupia soon came to realize what it means to be governed by a man who is at heart an ant.

And thus, all the rest of the day, Yuri consolidated his position as King of Cupia. The opposition, which even at its height had been merely sporadic, gradually died out to nearly nothing! It was amazing that the Cupians, after having so recently regained their freedom in a hard-fought war, should so easily let it slip through their fingers again with scarcely a struggle.

And yet were they to be blamed? For many generations, through five hundred years of servile peace, they had been the slaves of the ants; and, had it not been for the advent of Cabot the Minorian upon their planet, they never would have tasted even this brief two years of freedom.

All that they knew of warfare had been taught them as a game, under Cabot's competent leadership. Leadership! That was the key to the situation. Leadership, and an ideal, a rallying point. In the great War of Liberation, Myles Cabot had furnished the leadership, and King Kew the Twelfth had furnished the rallying point with his now famous speech, which I always like to compare with Lincoln's Gettysburg address. In fact, Cabot, too, had furnished the slogan with which that successful war had begun: "Forward into Formia, for Cupia, King Kew and Princess Lilla!"

Now, Kew lay dead in the stadium with a bullet through his loyal and sturdy heart. Lilla, their beloved Princess, was a thousand stads away to the northward. And Cabot the Minorian lay shackled in jail, deprived of his wonderful electrical headset, without which he was a mere deaf and dumb earthbeast, with no means to hold communication with his fellows, and in fact with no claim to being even human.

On the throne sat a prince of the royal house, the elder son of the sister of the late king. Apparently he was the rightful ruler of the Cupians. And if their rightful ruler chose to bring with him the domination of the ant men, it was too bad, but what could they do about it?

True, the Assembly had cancelled Yuri's succession to the throne and had bestowed it upon his younger brother, the loyal Prince Toron; but most of the populace doubted the legality of that move. Besides, Yuri was now on the throne. Possession was nine points of the law; and the Cupians, by five hundred years of slavery, had been trained to be great respecters of authority.

If Toron would but appear and contest the succession, there might be those who would rally to his standard. But where was he? He had been at the games in the stadium that morning, but no one had seen him since the assassination. Where was he now? A fugitive, with a price set on his head! It is hard to rally around a fugitive, especially when his whereabouts are unknown.

So Kuana rapidly subsided into quiescence. What might be going on in the rest of the kingdom could not be known; but, as for the capital, that appeared to be Yuri's.

Just before sunset, however, there came

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a sudden change in the atmosphere. Firing recommenced. Some of the yellow flags were torn down, and replaced with red. Some Cupians sallied from the house across the road from the jail, assaulted an ant policeman, and threw up a barricade extending from one side of the road to the other.

Thereat there was much running around in the corridors of the jail, and hurried conferences between the wardens, all of which the captives could see through the gratings of the cell doors.

"What is it all about?" Cabot wrote on the paper.

And his cellmate wrote back: "I can't understand it. They are shouting: 'Long live King Kew!'"

What could it mean? King Kew was dead. They had seen him lying there in the stadium with the blood pouring out of a gaping hole in his right breast. And yet now the populace were shouting: "Long live King Kew."

What could it mean?

CHAPTER III

GREAT NEWS

JUST then the cell door opened, and a shackled figure was thrust rudely in. It was Poblath, the mango. His captor was Trisp, the bar-mango.

It was now Trisp's turn to gloat. Said he: "Long have I served as your assistant, O Poblath, and long have I coveted your position. Now it is mine for the asking. I suspected you of treason when you deprived Cabot of his antennae. I noted that you preserved his apparatus in a cupboard in your office. But when you refused to permit the jailers to fire on the insurgent blockade in the street below, then I knew for sure of your treason to King Yuri. Now I go to clear the blockade. Thence to the king to be made mango of Kuana!"

He left. From the window, the three prisoners watched the insurgents below. In a few moments the jail opened fire on them, and they withdrew in disorder. Once more the street was clear for the passage of alien troops.

"But they are still cheering for King Kew," wrote Hah.

By this time Poblath had begun to recover from the shock of his sudden incarceration. He called to the professor, and soon the latter had turned his back to the ex-mango and was rummaging beneath Poblath's toga with his shackled hands. After considerable search he found what he was after, a small pouch containing three keys.

In a moment the prisoners were free of their handcuffs. Another moment and the cell door swung open. The prisoners emerged and glanced cautiously around.

The corridor outside was dark and silent. Most of the wardens were on the roof, firing at the insurgents who had returned to the attack with great force.

Cabot, Hah Babbuh and Poblath did not stop to release any of their companions, but hurried to the ground floor. On the way they met but two of the jail guards. Hah smashed in the skull of one with a handcuff; the other had the good judgment to join the party.

It scarcely seemed a moment before the big steel doors swung open at Poblath's touch, to admit the besiegers. A brief exchange of greetings, and they swarmed up the stairs to clear the roof, while Myles and his two friends followed, to release the other prisoners.

Every prisoner, regardless of what he was in for, was given a chance at freedom if he would join Cabot's forces, and none refused. They were all freed by the time the party from the roof returned with sufficient captured arms to equip nearly all the rest. On the roof every warden lay dead.

Then the cabinet, the generals, the leaders of the invading party, Poblath and Cabot adjourned to Poblath's office for a council of war. Of course, the first thing was for Myles to get his headset again; but alas, the cupboard lock had been wrenched from its hinges, and the precious apparatus lay smashed to atoms on the floor.

I cannot regale you with very much of

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the conversation which took place during the events which now crowded fast upon Cabot; for, from now on, all words radiated by the antennae of the Cupians were absolutely lost to him.

Hah Babbuh, as Chief of Staff, presided in view of the earth-man's disability. He opened the conference with some questions to the leader of the insurgents, and the latter replied.

The effect was electrical! The whole assemblage rose to their feet, with expressions of intense joy on their faces, rushed over to Cabot and began patting him on the cheek, the Porovian equivalent of a handshake.

What could it mean?

Finally, sensing his bewilderment, Poblath seized the paper and stylus, and wrote the startling information: "You are the father of King Kew the Thirteenth!"

When they had all calmed down a bit, it developed that Princess Lilla had given birth to a son at Lake Luno about an hour before the old king had been shot. This made the baby the King of Cupia, and deprived Yuri not only of his title to the throne, but also of his immunity for the assassination of Kew the Twelfth.

"Would that I had not stayed your hand!" wrote Hah Babbuh.

To which message, Poblath added the philosophical comment, "He who plays safe will often be sorry."

Cabot was too full of surprised joy and wonder to write any reply.

Having completed the celebration, the conference settled down to business again.

During the congratulations, the earth man had scarce had time for any feelings except stunned stupefaction; but now, as the conference took up its duties again, his radio-deafness gave him a chance to reflect.

"My baby! My baby boy! *Our* little son!"

A warm thrill of pride and joy flooded through Cabot's body. But this was immediately followed by a heart-gripping pang of fear. Was Lilla well? And this question was followed by another, even more terrifying. Were the Princess Lilla and the baby king safe from the clutches of Yuri?

Yuri had killed his venerable uncle. He had set a price on the head of his own brother. He had turned his country over to the control of its hereditary enemies. He was wading through blood to a coveted throne. Then was there any doubt that he would murder his beautiful cousin and her infant, if they stood in the path of his remorseless ambition?

Cabot, seizing his pad and stylus, plunged into the work of the council. They must act, and act quickly, if they would save his loved ones.

IT WAS agreed that Myles Cabot should be proclaimed regent—it ought, by rights, to have been Lilla, but Cupia was in need of an active regent in Kuana at that moment—and he should keep the same cabinet, making Poblath Minister of Play to fill the place vacated by his own elevation; that Poblath and a specially selected squad of sharpshooters were to take the jail kerkools and try and break through, rouse the north country, and protect Lilla and the baby; that Buh Tedn and the regent should beat a strategic retreat to the northward with all the troops which they could gather; and that Hah Babbuh, with a mere handful of followers, was to hold the jail as a nucleus for the dissatisfied element of the city, and also for the purpose of diverting Prince Yuri's attention from the strategic retreat.

The Mecca of all these operations was to be the town of Pronth in the Okarze Mountains, beyond Lake Luno. There the inhabitants were known to be of unquestioned loyalty, not only to the Kew dynasty, but also to Miles Cabot. There a mere handful could hold the passes indefinitely against an army, and there the air pockets would protect them to some extent from the airplanes of the ants.

Prince Toron, as already stated, had been present at the games in the stadium, but nothing had been seen or heard of him since the assassination.

The first step in these maneuvers was

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carried out by Cabot's detachment sallying forth and manning the barricades in front, which had not been cleared away by the enemy during the battle in the jail. A few shots from the rifles of Cabot's Cupians, and the long avenue was cleared of ant men for its entire length. Meanwhile Poblath and his sharpshooters packed themselves into the police kerkools in the garage of the jail, and the gyroscopes were set running.

At a signal from Buh Tedn, the garage doors were flung open, the barricades pulled aside and the swift and silent two-wheeled Porovian autos charged forth. With a cheer, Cabot's party followed them. At the capitol, the kerkools turned sharp to the right and were soon lost to view, nor were they in sight on the cross-street when those who were following on foot reached the turn.

The foot troops had considerable difficulty in making the turn, for they were subjected to a withering fire from the palace. But, by sending snipers in advance to take cover at the corner, they were able to reduce the enemy fire considerably, and the rest of the party crossed the spot at the double-quick with very few casualties.

Out of range of the palace, they reformed their forces and proceeded without event to the northern edge of the city. Here, however, they met a formidable blockade of Formians. As there were no signs of disabled kerkools, it was rightly assumed that Problath had gotten through before the erection of this barricade. But how Buh Tedn and Cabot were to get *their* troops through was another question.

Tedn decided to charge, in three successive waves, and accordingly launched the first assault.

As the first assault was beaten back, the second passed it with a rush, only to recoil in confusion before the fire of the Formians. The third wave flatly refused to go forward. In spite of the lessons taught by the overwhelming Cupian success in the great war of liberation, the tradition of Formian invincibility was still deeply rooted in the subconscious minds of most Cupians.

So they withdrew to the cover of a cross-street and held a council. As a result, some of their best marksmen were sent into adjoining houses to pick off whatever ant men dared show themselves above the fort.

Then Buh Tedn formed for the charge. This time the entire Cupian force advanced together, scaled the redoubt and beat back the black defenders.

As Cabot went over the top himself, he looked down the muzzle of an enemy rifle and discharged his own revolver in the Formian's horrid face. Then he knew no more.

HE CAME to in jet darkness, buried beneath an overwhelming weight, which required long and patient effort to dislodge. Finally, however, he struggled to the surface, and found that he had been lying in the ant-barricade, covered by the dead bodies of his comrades-in-arms.

Cabot, himself, presented a gruesome figure. His hair was matted with blood, but whether his own or that of some Cupian he could not tell. Probably his own, as there was a severe wound along the ridge of his scalp, presumably caused by a bullet from the rifle, down the muzzle of which he had looked as he surmounted the barricade. His toga, too, was drenched with blood. He felt weak and dizzy. Groping for support, he looked about him.

The street was lighted but vacant. The night was warm and moist and fragrant, as are all nights on Poros, but it afforded no balm for the aching head of Myles Cabot.

Among the dead Cupians in the barricade were many bodies of the ant-men, still grappling with their adversaries, even in death. Myles counted the bodies of the Cupian slain and was reassured to find that they represented but a mere negligible fraction of those who had stormed the redoubt. Of course, it was just as hard on the dead to be dead, regardless of proportions; so Cabot did not have the heart to rejoice at the fewness of the slain. But at least it was comforting to know that a large majority of his brave men had sur-

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vived, and even more comforting to realize that they were presumably by this time far on their way northward toward Lake Luno, Lilla and the little king. At least Cabot hoped so. Of course, the Cupian assault might perhaps have been repulsed. At any rate, the victors, whoever they had been, had robbed the dead of their arms and ammunition. Cabot's revolver, being in his right hand, had been overlooked, for the inhabitants of this planet are left-handed; but his cartridge belt was gone.

Just then his thoughts were rudely interrupted by the arrival of a Formian sentinel. Myles withdrew precipitately into a darkened doorway. The ant man halted directly outside the hiding place, almost within reach of Cabot's hands. For a moment Cabot had the idea of shooting him. Then it occurred to him that the noise of his revolver would attract attention and bring other ant men to the scene. Then he realized that it would not, for, of course, the inhabitants of Poros have no sense of hearing. So he fired and rid the planet of one more member of the dominant race. But this left him only four cartridges. He could not replenish his supply from his victim, for the latter had been armed only with a sword.

Stepping over the dead body, Cabot staggered down the street and soon gained the open country. Here there were no more street lights, and accordingly walking in the pitch darkness became very difficult. Finally after falling off the road several times, he groped his way into the woods and, crawling into the heart of a tartan bush, lay down to sleep.

Until reaching this haven of refuge, he had really had scarcely a moment for consecutive thought since the fatal shot had been fired that morning. Think of it! This morning, only six parths ago, he had been sitting at a Peace Day celebration, as Field Marshal and Minister of Play of a peaceful nation. Now this whole nation had been plunged into civil war and invaded by its enemies, and he himself was a hunted fugitive. And in the meantime what a host of events had occurred! A beloved monarch assassinated. His traitorous murderer declared king. The best and most loyal men of all Cupia thrust rudely into prison. Cabot himself deprived of both speech and hearing, by the destruction of his artificial antennae. The domination of hideous ants over Cupia, which had taken a grueling war to destroy, now restored by a *coup d'etat* in an instant. Poblath overthrown as mango of Kuana.

Then the joyous news of the birth of a new king to dispute the succession with the renegade Yuri. Fighting in the streets. The siege of the jail. The renaissance of the Army of Liberation. The storming of the redoubt. And finally Cabot's own seeming death and resurrection.

He wondered for the safety of the Princess Lilla. And of his son, the new-born king. Poor wee baby! Little would he know, as he lay kicking and bubbling in his cradle, that he was the storm center of a whole empire, that the fate of a whole planet was wrapped up in him.

Myles thrilled at the thought that he was a father. Yet he shuddered at the realization of what lay before his loved one. And thus musing, he fell into a fitful sleep, from which he awakened in the morning with no clear understanding as to how much of his recollections of the day before had been reality and how much a dream. In fact, it was not until many sangths later, when he had an opportunity to compare notes with several others of the chief actors of this eventful drama, that he was able to reconstruct the actual happenings of Peace Day in the year three-fifty-ten. And even now, the entire day stands forth in his memory as one long, terrible, continuous nightmare.

But, from the morning of his awakening in the tartan bush, his recollections, although terrible, are clear.

His first thoughts on arousing himself were: "Lilla! And my baby!"

So, pushing the protecting leaves to one side, he set out to the northward. A thousand stads away lay Lake Luno and the royal family. Four days' travel by kerkool. Fifty days' travel on foot under favorable

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circumstances! And here he was essaying it, battered and wounded, without antennae, without food, without an umbrella to shield him if the scorching sun should burst through the protecting clouds; in fact, with nothing but an army revolver, four cartridges, and an unconquerable will.

Myles Cabot recited to himself:

"If you can force your heart and nerve and sinew
To serve your turn long after they are gone,
And so hold on when there is nothing in you,
Except the Will that says to them: 'Hold on'!"

He could and he would! And so he set out on that thousand-mile journey.

His plan was to reach the nearby suburb of Lai, where he had many friends. Surely one of these would lend him fresh raiment, and a kerkool in which to overtake the army of Buh Tedn.

At the first brook to which he came, he shed his toga and washed from it as much of the blood and grime as possible. Also he bathed his face and head. The cool water stilled the ache of his wound, and refreshed him greatly. His appearance now was thoroughly presentable, but the destruction of his antennae by Trisp in the jail prevented him from looking like a real Cupian any longer. At most he looked like a deformed person, a deaf-mute. Still, his friends would not mind this, if he could but reach them.

He breakfasted off of milk which he drew from a herd of aphids, those green cows kept by both races of intelligent beings on Poros. And then he felt nearly his old self again, and pressed on with more vigor.

AROUND midday, 600 o'clock, he reached the outskirts of the town of Lai. One of the first houses was the villa of a very intimate friend of his and Lilla's. There it stood, set in a clearing, surrounded by thick woods, a little way to the right of the road, at the end of a flower-flanked path. The architecture was typically Cupian, white stucco with steep red-tilted roof, ornamented with turrets, towers and minarets.

Just as Cabot was about to turn in at the gate, a Formian appeared at the door. This was unexpected. His friend had never before been known to entertain ant men. Ant men were the last creatures on the planet whom Myles desired to see at that moment, so he hastily passed by.

At last he topped a rise, from which he could see the whole of Lai stretched beneath him. And what a sight met his eyes. Not a Cupian stirring in the usually bustling little village, but instead all the streets patrolled by ant men.

There would be no haven here. So Myles sadly circled the town, rejoined the road at the other side, and resumed his journey northward.

Day after day he trudged on, avoiding the towns, which he rightly assumed were policed by ant men as Lai had been, and hiding whenever a kerkool approached or an airplane motor sounded in the sky. True, the kerkool might bear friends, but he was taking no chances.

His sustenance was root-crops stolen from the fields, edible twig-knobs plucked in the woods, green milk drawn from the grazing aphids, and even lobsterlike parasites plucked from the sides of these creatures. Once he was about to extract a bullet from one of his cartridges and discharge the blank into a pile of dried leaves to start a fire and roast some of these parasites; but, realizing that his ammunition was now limited to four rounds, he decided to forego the experiment.

His hair and beard grew long and unkempt, so that now there was no possible hope of escaping unrecognized, if ever he should be seen. For in the whole history of the planet Poros, there had never been but one person with long hair and beard, and that one person was Myles Cabot, the earthman. Cupians cannot grow beards, and the hair on their heads remains a fixed length, never requiring cutting.

As he plodded along, day after day, he did a great deal of thinking. Most of it

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was useless recrimination: "Why wasn't I a bit quicker on the draw, that fatal morning in the stadium? Why did I ever leave Lilla alone at Lake Luno, even at the behest of her father, the king? Was I not influenced by my conceited desire to pose as a popular hero on the anniversary of the beginning of my great victory over Formia, and by my wish to star as a pistol-shot, rather than by deference to the king?"

And so on. And so on.

Then, too, he worried a great deal about the safety of Lilla, and their little son. And about the progress of the civil war. Not daring to approach any towns, he was completely cut off from all knowledge of current events. The only clues he had were the fact that he met no Cupians stirring abroad, that the roads were constantly patrolled by ants in kerkools, and that airplanes scoured the sky.

This might mean any one of several things. For instance, it might mean that the insurrection had crumbled, and that the last survivors were being run down. Or perhaps the ant men were trying to prevent reenforcements from joining an already augmented Cupian army in the Okarze Mountains. Or perhaps it might even be that they were scouting against an impending advance of overwhelming forces from the Cupian strongholds. But whatever it meant, Cabot was resolved to reach Lake Luno, and find out what had happened to Lilla, and little Kew.

Finally, one day, he espied through the woods the tower of one of the radio relay-stations which formed a part of the network of wireless communication which he had installed throughout the kingdom.

As Minister of Play in the cabinet of King Kew XII, Myles had introduced radio broadcasting, and thus had given to the Cupians the benefit of music, which heretofore their lack of ears had denied them, but which he had been able to translate into their antenna-sense.

One of the stations of his broadcasting system now loomed before him. There was more than an even chance that it was an automatic station, and that the attendant would be absent. Although a trip to this tower would take Cabot a bit out of his way, yet it might enable him to listen in on the news of the day, and thus find out how his loved ones fared, and how the revolution was progressing. So thither he turned his weary steps.

The aerial loomed above the tree-tops about a stad away to the right of the road. Thick woods intervened. The trees were mostly of that typical Porovian variety which resembles a greatly enlarged form of that red-knobbed many-branched gray lichen which is so commonly found growing on rocks and tree-stumps on the earth. There was a heavy underbrush of ferns and small conifera. Gayly colored plants, of the sort which grace the fields and gardens of Poros, were conspicuously absent; but there was no lack of tropical vines and gray moss. Here and there flitted four-winged snakes, but in numbers merely sufficient to be a nuisance, not a menace.

Through all this tangle, Myles Cabot had to plow his way for at least one whole stad, in order to reach the relay-station. And to add to his discomfiture, the sky began to darken. This portended one of those torrential Porovian thunderstorms, the like of which is never experienced on earth.

Well, there was one thing to be thankful for: the relay-station would furnish a shelter from the storm, if he could but reach it in time.

He did. The storm had not yet broken when he entered the little clearing where the station stood. A brief reconnaissance convinced him that the shack was vacant. Its door was standing open. So he cautiously made his way inside.

But, even as he entered, he realized how foolish he had been, for of course the set would be without earphones, as the inhabitants of Poros have no sense of hearing; and Cabot's own earphones lay smashed on the floor of the office of the mangool of Kuana.

All was not lost however. He could still use the set for the purpose of sending in

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dots and dashes a cryptic message, which Poblath alone would understand. Such as "When will we four play ming-dah again?" for Poblath, and his wife Bthuh had been the most frequent opponents for Myles and Lilla in that four-handed Porovian checker-game. Or, for Toron's antennae alone, "The black light still shines," for to no one except Toron had Cabot disclosed that masterpiece of optical science which had safeguarded the American troop-ships in the war against Germany. So with renewed courage, he continued to enter. But, alas, the entire installation lay wrecked by some vandal hand.

Cabot surveyed the disorder sadly for a long time. Then he turned to the door to resume his journey north—

And looked into the muzzle of a rifle held by an ant man in the doorway.

Up went Cabot's hands. The other advanced to shackle him.

CHAPTER IV

TRAPPED

AT THIS point in the narrative, it is both fitting and proper for me to digress for a moment, in order to explain how these radio-relay stations came to be dotted all over the country of Cupia.

Back in the early days, radio engineers speculated as to why it is that a crystal set can often receive much more distant stations when located in the vicinity of a tube set. Various more or less absurd theories were advanced, such as induction, a field of negative resistance, and so forth. Yet the true explanation is very simple. It was one of the first points about radio communication which Cabot explained to me after his return from Poros.

As for induction being the cause, one has only to consider the electrical law whereby the induction field diminishes as the square of the distance, whereas the field due to actual radiation diminishes only as the distance.

"A field of negative resistance"—I defy any one to explain what he means by that in such a connection.

One further theory remains, namely, electrostatic coupling. I do not know that this explanation has ever been seriously advanced. If advanced, it would be very plausible. But I should like to see a proponent of such an explanation draw a diagram of the electrostatic coupling between a crystal set with a coil antenna, and a vacuum set with capacity antennas, or vice versa. Maybe it is possible, but I don't see how; and Myles Cabot, the greatest radio expert of two worlds, is my authority for saying that it can't be done.

No, Cabot's explanation which follows sounds a lot more sensible than any of the foregoing. And the fact that he has demonstrated his theory, and has put it to practical use on Poros, proves it to be so. The man who has done that, will some day find a practical use even for static. Enough said!

This is his explanation: Compare the situation in a sending set and a receiving set. In the former, with the tube oscillating, we have in the antenna-circuit an oscillating current with impressed sound waves. A regenerative receiving-set picks up this current, very weak, and builds it up to the limit of the capabilities of our tube; so that we have in the antenna-circuit of a receiving-set the same situation as though we were sending, only, of course, weaker because of the small size of our tube. And we actually *are* sending at such a time, although faintly, thus augmenting the impulse from the distant broadcasting station, and thus undoubtedly accounting for the hitherto unexplained phenomenon of long-distance crystal reception.

Cabot, while still on earth, demonstrated this theory to his own satisfaction by experimenting with a tube-set and a crystal-set half a mile apart, and by actually catching in his crystal-set the not-quite-damped-out sixty-cycle hum of the power-line which he was using to run his tube-set. Then, by substituting a large transmitting-tube for his small receiving-tube, although still leaving the set hooked up as a receiving set, he was able to relay even distant stations to friends with crystal sets scat-

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tered all over Back Bay, Boston. The removal of the phone circuit was the final step to convert his set into a pure radio relay-station, nothing more.

These early earthly experiments of his recurred to his mind when establishing the radio routes on the planet Poros. Hence the myriad relay-stations which dotted the planet, in one of which he now found himself a prisoner.

But as the ant man advanced to secure his captive, the long-impending tropical thunderstorm broke in all its fury.

Gusts of rain swirled in at the door. Crash after crash of almost continuous thunder shook the ground. The lightning fell in one continuous sheet of flame, so that all was as bright as daylight. But still the ant man kept his rifle pointed at Cabot. Quite evidently the creature wished to capture the earthman alive.

Finally there came a roar more deafening than all the others, followed by a ripping of timbers, a deluge of rain, and then the collapse of the entire building, pinning both captor and captive beneath it. The tower of the aerial had been struck by lightning, and had fallen.

The dash of rain against his face brought Myles Cabot to his senses. He found himself momentarily free from the ant man, and yet not free at all, merely free from the ant man, for he was pinned to the floor, flat on his back, with a heavy timber across his chest. Struggle as he would, he could not dislodge it. And to make matters worse, a stream of rain water now began to flow into the room, threatening to submerge him. The Formian was nowhere to be seen; evidently he was buried by some other part of the building.

Although the stream continually flowed past, yet, as the downpour kept on, the level of the water gradually rose, until only an extreme craning of Cabot's neck kept his nose above the surface.

Finally, with a tidal wave, the waters swept over his head, and at the same instant something beneath him gave way, and he was carried under the beam and along with the current. Quite evidently the supports which held the floor had been washed out just in time.

After a few deep breaths to relieve his strangled lungs, Cabot scrambled to his feet in the shallow stream. The rain had stopped, but dark clouds still scudded along beneath the silver sky.

Cabot made his way back to the road, bruised and wet, and continued his interminable journey northward.

As he trudged on, he had plenty of time for thought, although his senses had to be always on the alert for scouting-planes, for kerkools on the roads, and for other forms of enemy activity. At towns, and even at isolated farms, he had to detour with exceeding care, in order to escape detection. In some places where the woods happened to be fairly open, this was not so hard; but wherever the undergrowth was thick and tangled, this detouring proved to be most laborious.

ALL day long he pressed on, day after day, northward, ever northward, toward Luno Castle and his loved ones. His thoughts consisted mostly in worrying, and wondering what had occurred to Lilla and to baby Kew, of fearing for the worst, and of blaming himself for whatever might have happened to them.

Undoubtedly the fleet of kerkools, manned by his friend Poblath, the mango of the Kuana jail, had long since reached Lake Luno. Undoubtedly other kerkools, manned by supporters of the atrocious Prince Yuri had also arrived at that point. Probably considerable bodies of the partisans of both factions in this civil war had also congregated there. The question was: which group had got there first, and what had been the outcome of the clash that had inevitably followed? The answer Cabot could not know until he arrived there himself. So he pressed on, ever thinking of Lilla, of Lilla and his baby; and ever borne up by his longing for his loved ones.

The one thing which saved him from exhaustion was the fact that travel at night was impractical. In the starless jet blackness of the Porovian night, it was difficult

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to keep on the concrete road, and even more difficult for him to find his way on detours through the tangled tropical forests. Thus, for six out of the twelve parths that make up one revolution of the planet about its axis, he was forced against his will to rest, regardless of how eager he was to reach his journey's end.

Every night, as the western sky turned pink from the unseen setting sun, Cabot would penetrate into the woods at the side of the road, seek out some thicket, crawl into the midst of it, lie down, cover his weary body with leaves, and sink into a troubled sleep.

In detouring, except in the early morning or the late afternoon, when the pink light on the one hand or on the other served to show him which was east and which was west, it was very difficult to keep himself properly oriented; and accordingly he frequently lost his way.

On one such occasion, after wandering aimlessly through the woods for some time, he finally came out upon a grassy hill, overlooking a small sandy plain. He sat down for a while on the crest, and surveyed the scene below him. It was by far the most peculiar expanse of sand which he had ever seen. Its entire surface was pitted with large cup-shaped depressions. But almost every one of these craters here was approached by a long, winding furrow, as though a huge snow-plow had got lost for quite a distance, in trying to make its way out of the crater.

Myles Cabot was primarily an inquisitive scientist, so for the present he forgot his troubles, forgot even his quest, engrossed in the problem presented by the scene on the plain below. As he intently scanned the view, his eye caught a slight movement of the sand at the bottom of one of the depressions. He watched this particular hole for some time, but nothing further happened; so he studied one of the others for similar phenomena, and at last was rewarded by the sight of a slight spurt of sand.

"These holes are probably of a volcanic nature," he mused, "but apparently their eruptions are not powerful enough to be dangerous. This is the first evidence of volcanic action which I have ever seen on the continent of Poros. Accordingly a study of these holes may furnish some valuable information, bearing upon the nature of the boiling seas which surround the continent."

So he arose, and trotted down the grassy slope to the sandy plain below. Along the edge of the sand there ran a little brook. Here was a chance to combine business with pleasure. So Cabot laid aside his revolver, for which he had long since fashioned a rough sling of grass-rope. He took off his toga, washed it thoroughly in the stream, and hung it up to dry on a nearby bush. He bathed himself, and took a long drink of the cool water. Then, feeling much refreshed, he walked across the plain to examine the craters, while his clothing dried.

The sand was hot and dry. It was infested with brinks, those miniature kangaroolike lizards which are so common on Poros. But he scarcely heeded the heat or the blinks, so intent was he on the scientific problem before him.

Gingerly he approached the rim of one of the craters, and sat naked for a long time on the edge, staring into the interior. the hole was about fifty paces across, and of a depth fully six or eight times the height of a man. There was absolutely nothing remarkable about it except its size and the problem of what could possibly have created it.

AFTER a period of intense watching, Cabot tired and permitted his gaze to shift to the other holes about him, then to the edge of the plain, then to the country beyond. Whereat he was startled, and a bit annoyed, to find that a stretch of road was in plain view but a short distance from his position. Conversely his position must be in plain view from the road, and therefore he was in danger of being observed by the occupants of any passing kerkool.

Instantly his quest, and his duty to his

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country and his family became uppermost in his mind. Forgotten was his scientific interest in the mysterious plain with its strange depressions, as he jumped to his feet to resume his journey northward.

But, unfortunately, his scrambling to his feet disturbed the ground where he had been sitting. It crumbled away beneath him. He stood for a moment at the very edge of the crater, pawing the air, struggling for a foothold; and then, amid a shower of pebbles, he slid down into the depths.

His slide was not absolutely precipitate. He struggled upward as the gravel rolled down beneath him; and thus, slipping, scrambling, gaining an inch and then losing two, he gradually approached the bottom.

His descent was momentarily stayed by a piece of rotten log about the size of his own body, which projected from the side of the crater, and with which he came in contact; but finally his struggles loosened it, and it bounded down the slope ahead of him. As he slid after it, he instinctively watched its downward course. It rolled to the exact center of the bottom of the pit; and as it came to a stop, the sand beneath it heaved convulsively, and from each side of it rose out of the ground a glittering scimitar fully ten feet long, which closed upon the log like the blades of a pair of buttonhole scissors, and dragged it beneath the surface.

A moment later, and Cabot himself rolled to the exact spot where the log had been seized and had disappeared.

Like a flash he realized the full extent of his predicament. He had fallen into the trap of a gigantic ant-bear. Years ago, as a boy at Atlantic City, he had often lain on the piazza floor of the bathhouse and watched through the cracks the antics of the miniature beasts of prey in the sand below. He had seen them dig their pits; two or three inches across; he had seen them plow a trail to their pits; he had seen inquisitive beach ants, in search of food, follow these trails, fall into the pit, and be dragged struggling beneath the surface, to furnish a meal for the ant bear which lay in wait, buried in the center of the depression which it had dug. But never had he pictured himself as falling into one of these traps.

Was he in one now? It could hardly be. And yet, as there were hugh ants ten feet long on Poros, and also slightly smaller breeds without the intelligence which characterized the Formians, why not ant-bears in proportion? It certainly sounded plausible.

Of course, these thoughts, which take so long to set down here, passed through Cabot's brain in a single instant. He felt no fear, merely a keen scientific interest in the situation. But, quickly as his mind worked to analyze his predicament, it worked as quickly to determine a course of action.

The subterranean beast spewed up the unappetizing log of wood which it had seized, and snapped its mandibles together again; but Cabot had already sprung to

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When disorder of kidney function permits poisonous matter to remain in your blood, it may also cause nagging backache, rheumatic pains, leg pains, loss of pep and energy, swelling, puffiness under the eyes, headaches and dizziness.

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his feet, and had passed beyond the fatal spot. The sharp jaw just barely missed him.

His bound carried him part way up the opposite side, but almost immediately he started slipping back again into the center. This time, however, instead of merely striving to scale the unstable walls, he ran in a circle, round and round the flashing jaws.

As he increased his speed, his centrifugal acceleration, like that of a horse-chestnut which a small boy whirls on a string, gradually forced him outward and upward, thus offsetting to a large extent the sliding action of the sand.

But the beast at the bottom, evidently tiring of snapping aimlessly in the air while its prey circled about it and showered it with dirt, began to dig itself out.

Just then Myles espied a branch or root protruding from the bank just above the level of his head. With one last spurt, he leaped in the air and grasped the branch. For a moment he hung swaying beneath it. It held, and did not become dislodged from the bank. So gradually he hauled himself up, until finally he sat upon it.

The top of the bank was still too far away to reach, so for the present Myles just clung to his perch and panted. Great agonized sobs shook his frame. But at last he regained his breath, and then coughed and spat for a while until his aching lungs felt somewhat better.

Meanwhile the ant-bear, if such it was, slowly emerged from its place of burial. The beast was about thirty-five feet in length and resembled a hugh beetle, except that its six legs were all nearer to the head than in a beetle, thus giving it more the effect of a gigantic louse. With its ten-foot-long razor-sharp mandibles clicking hungrily, it slowly approached its prisoner, who watched it fascinated.

A slight noise across the pit-mouth momentarily diverted Cabot's attention, and looking up he saw a Formian standing at the edge with a rifle in its two front paws.

Evidently this new enemy had seen him from the road and had come over to enjoy the spectacle of the final destruction of the arch-nemesis of its race. And if by any chance Myles should escape from the enemy below, the enemy above stood ready to polish him off with a rifle-shot. A pleasant situation indeed!

Meanwhile the ant bear continued its slow but steady approach. And Cabot's revolver lay useless beside his drying toga at the edge of the plain.

CHAPTER V

ANT-BEAR AND ANT-MAN

IT IS characteristic of Myles Cabot that, in desperate situations such as the one in which he now found himself, he always either becomes engrossed in some personally-detached scientific speculation as to his own fate, or else his thoughts become filled with some absurd doggerel ditty or jingle.

In the present instance, as he clung naked to his perch on the side of the pit, with the ant bear approaching him from below and the ant man covering him with a rifle from above, all that he could think of was that old Harvard Glee Club song about the darky, which ends with the words:

"O Lord, if you can't help me,
For Heaven's sake don't help that bear!"

As the ten-foot jaws of the huge carnivorous beasts came closer and closer to Cabot, the ant man on the bank could no longer restrain his glee, and began dancing up and down with joy.

Cabot watched his antics with disgust, and even shouted across at him: "Shut up, you d— Eli! Do you think that that is a sportsmanlike way to act on the bleachers?"

But, of course, the ant didn't hear, as Cabot was without his headset and artificial antennae.

The ant continued to dance, and the ant bear continued to crawl up the side of the pit, when suddenly the edge of the crater crumbled beneath the ant, and in an instant he, too, was catapulted down into the arena.

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A shower of gravel smote the bear, and he could no more resist the tropism which it excited in his make-up than a sunflower can resist turning its face to the sun. With a swift somersault he seized the surprised Formian between his jaws, and then backed slowly down into the depths of the sand at the bottom of the pit.

Cabot watched the placid ant bear and the frantically but futilely struggling ant man until both had disappeared beneath the surface; then he heaved a sigh of relief, and looked for a way to escape before his jailer should digest the Formian and stir abroad again in search of further prey.

But he could see nothing which held out any hope. Then his scientific mind came to his rescue, and he strove to recall all that he had learned of the diminutive ant bears of the earth during his childhood. He reviewed each item of their habits, until he recollected the furrows which they dig to lure their prey into their pits. He remembered seeing similar furrows in the plain where he now was. One such might furnish a way out.

So he studied the edges of the crater until he located a slight dent at one side. Lowering himself from his perch, he cautiously made his way along the side of the pit until he came directly below the dent. There he started digging frantically, and soon had the satisfaction of seeing that the sliding sand was forming a gully in front of and above him.

Step by step he crawled up this gully, still digging, ever digging, until he had nearly gained the top, when he heard a click behind him.

Stopping digging, he glanced around, and there was the ant bear emerging from its lair, intent on eating him for its dessert.

With one last supreme effort, Cabot scrambled over the edge into the furrow, and started running along it with the beast in hot pursuit.

The furrow got shallower and shallower. Cabot could now see above the level of the plain as he ran on. It was like running in a dream. The shifting sands gave way with every step, so that progress seemed almost impossible, while the nightmare creature behind him gained, steadily gained.

And then Cabot reached the end of the furrow and raced out upon the open plain. To his surprise the bear stopped abruptly. Evidently there were rules-of-the-game which governed even the crude mental processes of this beast, and one of these rules was: "No fair catching one of the other side when out of your territory."

But Myles did not wait to see whether this rule held. He sped on to the edge of the plain and to the shelter of the surrounding woods. There he regained his toga and revolver, and then continued into the depths of the forest.

When he considered himself at a safe distance, he crawled into a clump of bushes; and not waiting for the night, lay down for a much-needed rest.

It was morning again before he woke. Making his way back to the road, he continued his interminable journey northward.

The word "northward" occurs very often, perhaps too often, in this narrative; but it is typical of Myles Cabot's quest. All day long, day after day, there rang in his ears the words, "northward, northward, ever northward." He recited the words in cadence with his stride, they sang in the wind and in the swish of the trees.

Have you ever sat at the extreme stern of an ocean liner in the moonlight and listened to the throb of the engines, the purr of the wake, and the hum of the rigging? Have you ever stood on the rear platform of a transcontinental train at night and watched the green lights slide backward in the converging darkness, and listened to the rush of the air and the rhythmic clank of the rails? If you have, you will understand the lilting song which impelled Myles Cabot onward, ever onward, toward his journey's end.

He had plenty of opportunity for thought as he dragged his weary feet along the road. He wondered as to the progress of the Civil War. Much of its success would depend upon whether Count Kamel had joined the Kew forces. Kamel had been the leader of the radicals in the popular

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assembly, who had launched the movement for a shorter working day, when the overthrow of the Formians two years ago had put an end to the period of slavery which every male Cupian had had to undergo in ant-land. But Prince Toron, the administration leader, at Cabot's instigation had blocked this move, and had put through a bill authorizing the expenditure of this extra time upon the construction of public works. The measure had been cleverly baited with a promise which appealed strongly to the sport-loving Cupians, namely, that the first building erected would be a huge stadium for the holding of national games—the very stadium in which the assassination of Kew XII had later taken place. Another move which had helped in the passage of this legislation was the creation of a new cabinet post, the Minister of Public Works, which portfolio had been tactfully offered to Count Kamel, the leader of the radicals.

CABOT smiled as he recalled these facts.

"I hope that Toron gets to him again," said Myles to himself, "and makes him some flattering offer in the present war."

Then he fell to worrying about the loss of his own artifical antennae. Without these, he would be unable to talk even to his own wife! And then it occurred to him that perhaps, even so, she might be able to talk to him, and thus only one-half of the conversation would have to be carried on by pad and stylus. How so?

Quite a while ago, not content with adapting himself so as to talk in the antenna-fashion employed by these people with whom he had cast his lot, he had started to teach the Princess Lilla to talk with her mouth; for the anatomists of the university of Kuana had told him that the Cupians possess vocal chords like those of earth folk, even though they never use them. Myles had rigged up a small transmitting set, so that she could hear her own vocalization; but the performance had embarrassed her frightfully; and, therefore, she always practiced alone.

"Myles," she used to say, "the Supreme Builder gave antennae to us Cupians. Is it not a sacrilege to flout His gifts? If He had meant the men and women of our planet to send with their mouths, would He not have given us those funny cups on the side of the head to receive with? You are excusable, for the Supreme Builder made you differently. But we Cupians were made to send and receive with our antennae. Yet it cannot be wrong for a wife to do as her husband does; so I am determined to try to learn to talk with my mouth."

It is fortunate that she adhered to this determination, for by so doing she changed the history of a whole planet. But that is an episode which will be related further on in this narrative. For, at the time of which I now write, Myles did not know what progress, if any, she had made with spoken speech.

One day as he trudged on, he came upon a placid herd of green cows, which were unusually well supplied with the red parasite which afflicts that breed. For some reason, the possibility of roast lobster was unusually alluring that day. Could he not spare just one cartridge, or must he save every shot for the enemy? And then it suddenly dawned on him that all these days he had not yet spent one single shot even on the enemy! What was the use of saving his ammunition for the ant men, and then never using it on them?

From that thought there developed a detailed plan of action, so obvious that he cursed himself for not having conceived of it before. And yet it is just simple thoughts that are the evidence of the highest form of invention, according to innumerable patent office decisions. Ideas so simple that any one could have thought of them, except for the fact that no one ever did think of them until the inventor came along; ideas which doubtless escaped even him for a long time.

Engrossed in his brilliant plan, Cabot forgot all about the green cows and their red parasites; so he pressed on, and soon found opportunity to put his plan into practice. For a kerkool, occupied by a

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single ant man, came charging down the concrete highway. As usual, Cabot hid in the bushes beside the road; but this time he took a pot-shot at the occupant of the car. The car, however, sped on and, rounding the turn ahead, disappeared from view.

Perhaps the bright idea hadn't been so bright after all; for how was Cabot, crack shot that he was, to expect that he could hit such a swiftly moving target as an ant in a kerkool?

Once again he took up his weary march. He rounded the turn ahead. And there lay the kerkool, wrecked beside the road. The shot actually had taken effect after all!

But what good was a *wrecked* kerkool? Would it not merely direct the attention of the Formians to the fact that one of their enemies was at large in this vicinity? It would; that was the second part of the plan. So Cabot lay down beside the wrecked car and awaited further developments.

Developments were not long in developing, for soon another kerkool stopped to investigate. Its occupants were two ant men, armed with but a single rifle to the two of them. One dismounted, leaving the rifle in the car, and pattered over to take a look at the wreck. Just about then Myles opened fire, but made the mistake of shooting first at the ant who was on the ground. The shot disabled the black antagonist, without killing him, and thus permitted him to radiate a warning to his companion, who, of course had not heard the revolver. Cabot, in turn, could not hear the radiated warning, so he merely surmised it, but he had learned fairly well to judge such matters during his three years on Poros.

The driver of the kerkool quickly fired one shot in Cabot's direction and threw on full speed ahead. But, with a leap, the earthman grabbed the rear end of the car and trailed out behind as it rapidly accelerated.

And now they were deadlocked. By this time Cabot had secured a foothold, but was not able to clamber aboard without dropping his revolver. Nor did he dare to shoot, for even a momentary release of the control levers by the driver would have spelled a collision and death to them both. The driver, for his part, was driving so fast that, in spite of his six legs, he could not spare two of them to take another shot at his passenger. Nor did he dare slow down, for that would have given Cabot an opportunity to shoot at him.

But the deadlock was to the ant's advantage. Time was playing into his hands; for he knew, and Cabot sensed, that they were rapidly nearing a town, at which it would be an easy matter for the ant to turn the man over to the authorities.

And then the great god coincidence sat into the game, in opposition to his old enemy, the god of time. A Formian pinqui, on guard at a cross-road, held up one paw as a signal to stop, for another kerkool was approaching from the left and had the right of way.

The driver disregarded the signal and the pinqui fired. The next instant Cabot was at the levers. How he ever got there he does not know; but the fact remains that fate had forced him into a situation which he had not dared to face, and that somehow he had mastered the situation.

The other car just barely skinned by the rear, the pinqui fired a parting shot, and Cabot's kerkool was off for the open country again.

The ant-man at his side turned out to be only stunned, which probably accounts for his not letting go the levers and wrecking the car when he was shot. He was rapidly recovering, and Cabot was unarmed, having dropped his revolver when he had sprung to seize the controls.

THE rifle of the ant was lying beneath the ant's body. Cabot stopped the kerkool as quickly as possible, and pondered for a moment on what course to take next. Escape from the ant would be easy; but if he fled, his whole brilliant scheme for obtaining possession of a kerkool would have gone for naught. To attempt to wrench the rifle from beneath the rapidly recuperating beast would probably bring the latter fully to his senses. Therefore, the only thing to do appeared to be to grapple with the

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Formian at once; and by taking him by surprise, try to get a strangle hold on him in his present comatose condition.

Imagine tackling single-handed an ant with the brain of a man, the size of a horse, with razor-sharp mandibles! But it was Cabot's only hope. If he could get the better of the Formian before the latter fully came to his senses, Myles had a bare chance of victory.

As bad luck would have it, the ant man came to his senses before Cabot did get the better of him. But not before Cabot had placed both hands under the edge of the ant's head, preparatory to twisting his neck, which is the weakest and most vulnerable spot on a Formian, the spot always sought in their frequent duels. A moment more of leeway, and this plan would have succeeded. But as it was, Myles was just too late. A sweep of the ant's leg and Cabot's right hand was dislodged and held down to the floor. The ant's jaw clicked savagely, as he turned and faced his opponent; but still the man's left hand held him off.

This could not last long. Cabot's left arm was gradually weakening. Nearer and nearer came the ant's jaws to his throat. The fingers of his right hand twitched convulsively as he strove to release that arm. And then those fingers touched something familiar.

With one last supreme effort, he moved his hand sufficiently to grasp his lost revolver. A shot severed the leg which was holding him, and in an instant he had thrust the smoking weapon squarely between the horrid jaws and fired again. The battle was over. It was Cabot's last cartridge, but the battle was over.

Cabot's first inclination was to heave the body over among the rubbish; but on second thought he decided to use it as the keystone of a rather clever plan of camouflage. Propping the dead carcass up at the levers, so that it would appear to be driving, he crouched beside it, reached in front of it and started the kerkool. Thank Heavens he had had experience in driving the seatless machines of the Formians, as well as the more comfortable cars of his own people.

Cabot passed through the first town without challenge, but evidently his strange appearance was noted and excited some curiosity, for at the second town he was confronted by a formidable array of ant pinquis. Hoist by his own petar, he was, for it was his own system of radio-communication, installed throughout the Kingdom, which had enabled the authorities to broadcast the news of his approach.

There was nothing to do but run the gantlet; so thrusting aside the dead body of his companion, Myles took a firmer hold on the levers and charged full into the midst of the pinquis.

The kerkool shuddered from stem to stern at the shock, but her gyroscopes kept her steady, and Cabot sped on out of town amid a shower of lead from the greatly surprised and demoralized enemy.

The third town proved to be even a worse proposition, for by now the ant-men fully recognized Cabot's identity and had thrown up a hasty barricade in the very heart of town. Putting on the brakes, he was just barely able to steer sharp to the right into a side street and thus avoid a collision with the barricade.

But, alas, the side street proved to be merely a blind alley, a cul-de-sac. He was trapped! Well, so be it. He had the rifle and ammunition of the dead ant, and would sell his life dearly. Although the rifle was built to fit claws rather than hands and a shoulder, still he could use it. So parking the kerkool crossways at the end of the street, he crouched behind it, and opened fire on the ant men as they rounded the corner in pursuit. They at once withdrew, thus giving him a brief respite.

But he realized that almost any moment they were likely to attack him from the roofs of the surrounding houses; and, accordingly, as soon as he had momentarily cleared the street, he withdrew into the house at its end. Of course, this was taking a chance on the occupants; but whoever they were, they discreetly kept out of the fight. The narrow window openings, which

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are typical of Porovian architecture, afforded ideal loopholes, and enabled Cabot to pick off with ease any black form which showed itself, either at the opening of the street or at the edge of any of the adjoining roofs. But this could not keep on forever. Even the bandolier which he had taken from the dead driver of the kerkool would in time become exhausted. And at any moment his enemies could be expected to enter his stronghold from the rear.

So leaving the muzzle of his rifle conspicuously protruding from the window, he made a hurried search of the ground floor of the house and finally found what he wanted, namely, a chair, the legs of which were about the same size and shape as rifle barrels. When he returned to the window with the four chair legs, the Formians were throwing up breastworks at the corner of the street, so that they could fire at the window from under cover.

Cabot arranged his chair legs at four of the windows, took a few shots at the barricade to let them know that his "force of defenders" was still active, and then hurriedly withdrew to the rear of the house with his real rifle and the few remaining rounds of ammunition.

The street in the rear was vacant. There were still many simple points of the art of war, which the black rulers of Poros had yet to learn. But evidently they were learning very quickly; for Cabot had scarcely gone two blocks before the alley behind him was filled with rattling Formians intent on entering the dwelling which he had just quitted. Luckily he gained the cover of a doorway without their seeing him; and finding the door unlocked, he entered his second house of refuge.

Within it was a Cupian. Eagerly the earthman rushed forward to greet him. But the Cupian, giving one horrified look at the intruder's hair and beard, fled frantically to the upper floors. He could not hear Cabot's words of reassurance, nor could Cabot hear the shriek of terror which he must have given. Undoubtedly he would spread the alarm; so there was no time to be lost.

Rushing through this house as he had through the other, Myles found that the rear of this house looked out upon open fields with woods beyond; and soon he was rapidly running toward this new haven.

But before he could gain the woods, the black pack debouched from the city in pursuit. It was now evening. The red sky in the west enabled Myles to get his sense of direction, and to proceed due northward through the woods, which fortunately he reached in advance of his pursuers. But still the pack gained.

Finally he arrived at the top of a cliff, beneath which lay a placid lake. And in the midde of the lake rose a turreted island. He had reached his journey's end after forty days of weary wandering. For this was Lake Luno!

There were only a few more paraparths of daylight left: so, lying down behind a fallen tree-trunk at the very edge of the bank, Cabot opened fire at the oncoming Formians. They, too, at once took cover, and thus both sides sniped at each other as the velvet blackness of the Porovian night crept up out of the eastern sky. Between shots the earthman took many a longing look at his home across the water.

Soon it would be too dark to see to shoot, and then the black horde would rush Cabot's position. So, just before the pink light had completely faded in the west, he rapidly fired all his remaining ammunition among the trees before him, heaved his now useless rifle over into the water, dived off into the lake below, and struck for his island, his family and his home.

AS HE cleaved the water with the long measured sweep of the trained swimmer that he was—for he had been a distinguished member of the aquatic team at Harvard and had never let a day go by without a dip in the tank—his heart sang to the time of his strokes: "Going home, going home, going home."

There was still just enough light in the sky for him to make out the outline of the island, but not enough for his pursuers to see him from the top of the cliff, though

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they did pepper the water pretty well in a direct line from their position to the island. But they gave him credit for much more speed than he was capable of, and so most of their bullets landed far ahead of him.

He knew that the Formians would not follow him farther, at least for that night. Formians are no swimmers, having a horror of water. There were plenty of boats along the shore of Lake Luno, but he was certain that his enemies would not venture out in the night, for fear of a spill. The only danger was that they might send some of their Cupian allies across; but he doubted this, in view of the fact that they probably thought him still armed with the rifle and respected his marksmanship. No, he was fairly safe for the present.

Darkness had completely enveloped the planet as Cabot pulled himself wearily upon the beach of his own island. For some time he lay weakly upon the sand, panting, utterly worn out. But at last he roused his exhausted frame and groped his way up the familiar path to the summit.

He was there! He was home! In a few moments he would be clasping his Lilla close in his arms. Oh, how he loved her, who had made this planet a home for him, instead of a mere dreary exile in the skies. In a few moments he would see for the first time his tiny son.

Forgotten were his enemies. Forgotten was Prince Yuri, the traitor. Forgotten was the thousand-stad journey. For as Myles clambered up the path, his sole idea was: "Lilla and home and little Kew!"

But the civil war was abruptly recalled to his memory when he reached the summit and found Luno Castle in total darkness! The massive door was standing idly open. There was not a sound of occupancy within.

With an intense pang of anxiety, he rushed across the threshold. He switched on the hall light. At least there was some comfort, for the electricity was still in working order. But scarcely had the light gone on, when a bullet whistled through the doorway from outside.

Doubtless the best sharpshooters of the enemy had been waiting on the opposite bank for just such an opportunity at this! Several more bullets followed in rapid succession, but a hasty slamming of the great door put a stop of any further incursions of this sort. And Myles found and lighted a pocket flash lamp, before proceeding to the upper floors. The flash would not throw enough light to furnish a target for the Formians.

Upstairs there was evidence of considerable confusion; furniture overturned, draperies torn and so forth; but no signs of his family, of the doctors and nurses, or of the servants. His heart was filled with an agony of suspense, his mind with a growing realization that he had arrived too late. Each room he penetrated in turn, searching, ever searching, until at last he reached the great banquet hall on the highest story.

And there a sad sight met his eyes! A square altar had been erected in the center of the room. Around it, in a Pythagorian triangle, stood three candlesticks, holding the burned-out stubs of candles. And on the altar, wrapped in the imperial robes of the Kew dynasty, lay the body of a baby Cupian, only a few sangths old!

With a cry of anguish Cabot clasped the tiny form to his breast and covered it with kisses. But it gave back no response; it was cold and stiff.

For a long time he stayed with his dead. He examined the little toes, with which, but for this cruel civil war, he might have played, "This little pig went to market." He chafed one tiny hand, and wrapped all its little fingers around a finger of his own, fondly picturing himself as strolling in the castle garden with a little toddler at his side. He knelt by the altar and talked baby talk to the little dead darling. Then wept bitterly and cursed the pride which had kept him from his child in its hour of need.

And what of Lilla, more precious to him than this infant whom he had never known? Very evidently she had been taken prisoner rather than killed. Perhaps Yuri would hold her as a hostage, as the price of Cupian surrender. Or more likely he would force

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her to marry him, as soon as he could dispose of her husband. Whichever was his plan, it behooved Myles to remain alive for Lilla's sake.

If Myles's own grief could be so sharp at the death of a baby whom he had never known, how much more bitter must have been the grief of her who had held this child warm and gurgling to her breast! And in addition, she was now the captive of the murderer of her father, of her babe, and—for all that she knew—of her husband.

Poor dear girl! Cabot roused himself and, clasping the little form close to his breast, carried it outside, and by the light of his flash, dug for it a shallow grave in the castle courtyard. Over the grave he said a Christian prayer, the mound he covered with flowers, and at the head he placed a rude cross.

The problem remained to reach the troops to the northward, and now for the first time he realized his own predicament. Undoubtedly the shore of Lake Luno was already thickly lined with ants, whose airplanes would certainly start dropping bombs on the island as soon as it was daylight. They might even attack by boat, but he rather thought that they respected his rifle too much for this. At all events, what possible chance was there for him ever to escape this trap?

But trap or no trap, northward again he must go, for it was only by reaching his army that he could learn the fate of his princess.

Northward again! After he had thought he had reached his journey's end. The word "northward" had already seared itself into his very soul during his interminable quest for Luno Castle, and yet now he must travel north once more.

If only he could travel east, or in some other direction than north!

CHAPTER VI

TRAPPED AGAIN

WITH a heavy heart, almost despairing, Myles Cabot quit the courtyard and returned to the banquet hall, where he noticed a letter pinned to the side of the altar with a dagger. The dagger was encrusted with blood, and bore the insignia of the family to which belonged Prince Yuri and Prince Toron.

The note read: "This is what did the deed. I came too late.—Toron, King of Cupia."

"He might have had the delicacy to have left off his title," thought Cabot. "Why remind me that the baby's death has made Toron the contender for the throne?"

And yet Myles was glad to be reminded of it. If Toron had succeeded in reaching the army alive, the Cupians still had time for a rallying point.

Then a horrible suspicion began to insinuate itself into Cabot's brain. Yuri had assassinated Kew XII, to make himself king. Was this a family trait? Had Toron killed the infant Kew XIII, to the same end? This seemed more and more likely, as Cabot's fevered brain dwelt upon the possibility. But, if so, then what had become of Lilla?

Dismissing these speculations, Myles prepared to journey on again. Luckily his belongings in the castle had been but little disturbed; and so he was able to eat, shave, cut his hair—after a fashion—and fit himself out with a fresh toga. Also he found a radio set, antennae, false wings, a revolver and ammunition. These he wrapped in waterproof cloth, along with the toga and some food; and, strapping the bundle to his back, swam stealthily to the north shore of the lake, it still being pitch black night.

Upon landing, he donned his apparatus, and crept up the bank and through the bushes at its top. Now at last he had the advantage of being able to hear both the movement and the radiated speech of his enemies, whereas they could hear only radiated sounds, of which he was not making any.

Thus he easily eluded the noisy sentinels who were patrolling the lake, and soon was far into the depths of the woods. But there he stopped. To go on would undoubtedly mean traveling in a circle. It was safer

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where he was. So crawling into the heart of a tartan bush, he gave himself up to much needed sleep.

A CRASH and a roar awakened him. It was broad daylight. How long he had slept could not be known, for all hours of the day are the same on Poros, save only early morning and late evening.

Again the crash and the roar. Airships must be bombing the castle, in which event all attention of the ant men was probably centered on the island in the lake, and now was the psychological time for an escape. Furthermore, by keeping the noise of the explosions always behind him, Cabot could be sure of traveling ever northward without danger of circling. So northward he pressed on, through the dense woods.

But his certainty that the Formians' attention was directed to the lake, proved to be his undoing, for he had scarcely gone half a stad, before he stumbled almost into the arms of an ant man. It is hard to say which of them was the more surprised. Cabot fired first, but missed. Then the Formian fired and missed. Then both of them retreated precipitately.

Soon Myles heard his enemy radiating loudly for help. Other ants must have been much nearer to him than the lake, for the S.O.S. was promptly answered.

And now there was impressed upon the earth-man one serious difference between his artificial radio-organs and the natural ones of the natives of this planet. Formians and Cupians can not only vary the capacity of their antennae—for tuning purposes—by waving them around, but also by the same method can, to a certain extent determine the direction from which the incoming waves are arriving. But Cabot's antennae, although looking just like those of his people, were stationary. Being artificial, they were without control-muscles at their base. He did his tuning in by means of a variable condenser and a variocoupler on his belt, and had no means for direction-finding. So now he was unable to sense from which quarter came the radiations of the approaching enemy reenforcements.

Taking a chance, however, he turned sharp to the right, and struck out through the forest, in an easterly direction. Overhead the sky was beginning to darken, and there was every sign of impending rain. But Cabot did not mind this. What was a wetting compared with meeting the ant men?

He heard no further calls from his enemies, and began to wonder if they had not given up the pursuit. Accordingly he turned northward again, or at least what he believed to be northward, for the bombing of Luno Castle had stopped, and there was no longer anything to guide him.

Time and again he halted at the sight of some gnarled tree trunk which more or less resembled a Formian. He went slowly and cautiously, frequently stopping to listen and look about him, but not a sound nor a radiation did he hear, not a sign of life did he see.

Reassured somewhat now, he was beginning to push on a little more boldly, when he was startled as he saw an ant man standing motionless beside a tree not far ahead. There could be no mistake about it this time. This was no stump, nor was it a twisted branch; and, as if to convince him, just then the Formian changed its position slightly. It was holding a rifle, and was very evidently on guard, keeping a careful watch of the woods about it.

Cabot had stopped short just as soon as he had caught a glimpse of the ant man, and a moment's observation convinced him that he himself had not yet been seen. So with great caution he began to back away. If only he could gain the shelter of a tartan bush close at hand, he would be safe.

Cabot could not remove his gaze from the Formian before him; and, though he kept moving away, every moment he was in an agony of fear lest the other should turn and look in his direction. Of course Myles was armed. A shot from his revolver would not be perceived by the antennae-sense which takes the place of hearing among the native inhabitants of Poros. But what he feared was that his enemy would radiate for help before the fatal

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bullet could do its work. Accordingly it would pay to try to get away by stealth.

He had taken several backward steps, and the Formian had not yet seen him. He was beginning to hope that he could withdraw in safety now. He could feel, rather than see, that he had almost gained the shelter he was seeking, when suddenly the ant man turned about and looked straight at him. The Formian was not more than two parastads away, and for a moment his surprise was as great as that of Cabot had been.

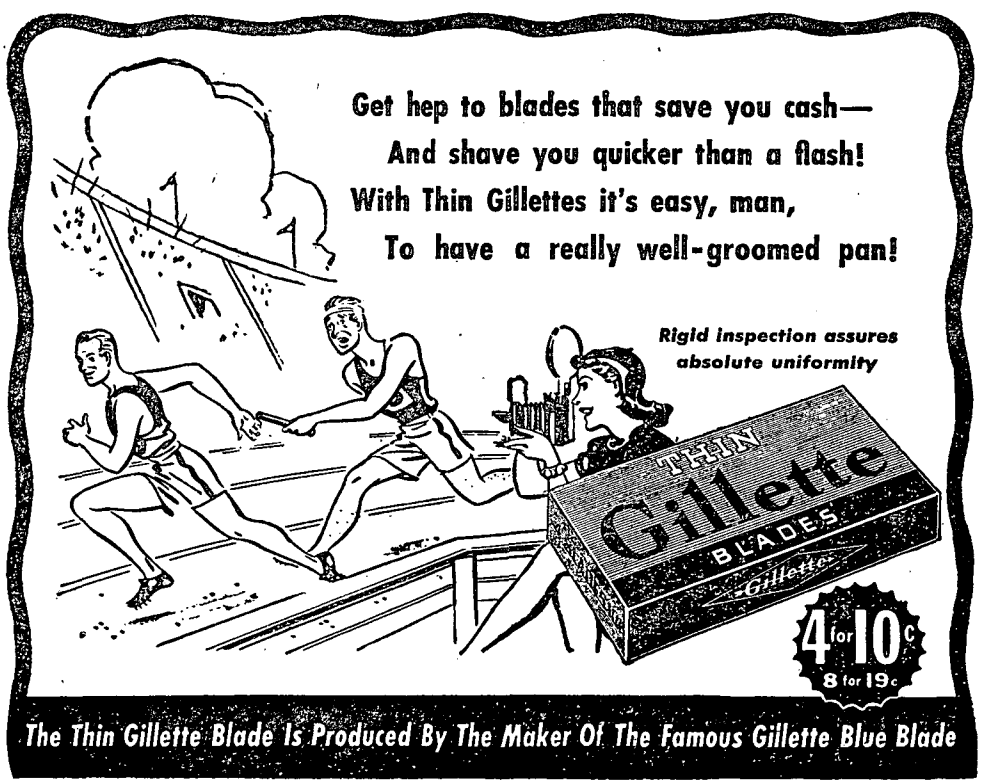
But it lasted only for an instant, and then he raised his rifle to his shoulder and fired. Quick as he was, however, Myles had been quicker, and the moment he saw the movement on the part of the Formian, he discharged his own revolver, and then turned and bounded into the forest.

He heard the other's bullet as it exploded in a tree near him, and also the loud radiations of the ant man, mingled with the explosion of his own bullet.

CABOT ran now at full speed, caring little in which direction he went, intent on escape from the immediate danger which had confronted him. Running swiftly though he was, he was able to hear the call of the Formian answered. A radiation that seemed to be far away, replied; and Cabot could not determine from which direction it came. He had no time, however, to stop and wait. His very life, and the destinies of a planet, might depend upon his speed. So he ran swiftly on.

He was satisfied that he could outrun the ant man whom he had just encountered, if in truth that one was in any condition to run, after Cabot's pot-shot at him; but the answer which had come to the S.O.S. raised a new danger. Undoubtedly his enemies had not abandoned the pursuit, and as one of them had been stationed in the woods, others probably were likewise.

Cabot ran for about five paraparths before he stopped. Satisfied by now that the Formian behind him could not overtake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him, if indeed that Formian were still alive, it was time for Myles to note where he was, and in what direction he was running. Fortunately at that moment he heard another explosion in the far distance to the right, presumably one more bomb dropped on Luno Castle. Accordingly he turned sharp to the left and started on again.

He had gone but a short distance, however, when his heart almost stood still. Right before him was Formian. The woods seemed to Cabot to be full of Formians.

The other had seen him, too, but before the ant man could shoot, Myles had dodged back among the trees and was fleeing in another direction. He could hear the calls and responses of many of his enemies. They were nearer now, and seemed to be on every side of him.

It was evident that they were stationed at intervals throughout the forest, and were waiting patiently for him to appear. They must be familiar with the region, and know just what they were doing.

Cabot was afraid. His fear was not a physical fear for his own safety as such, but was born of a sober realization of what his life might mean to the safety and happiness of the Princess Lilla, and to the cause of King Toron. Cabot wanted to live to reach King Toron, and satisfy himself who had killed baby Kew.

These thoughts were in the mind of the desperate man, as he dodged in and out among the trees, and ran with all the speed which his sorely tried body could command.

He did not know where to turn. The calls and replies of the ant men seemed to rise on every side of him. But anything was better than standing still and waiting for them to approach, and so in sheer desperation he ran on and on.

The shouts ceased presently, and the silence of the woods returned. Cabot was too well convinced that they had not abandoned the pursuit to trust to that, however. But suddenly he stopped. What was that? A puff of smoke was borne in on his face. Another and another followed, and as he looked back into the forest, he could see that clouds of smoke were beginning to appear. There was also an odor in the air, as of burning leaves.

He knew the meaning of it at once, and his face became set. The ants had set fire to the woods, and were trying to smoke or burn him out. So he turned quickly, and ran like a hunted animal. Indeed, Cabot could recall how he himself, in his boyhood days on earth, had considered it great sport to "smoke out" some helpless woodchuck or fox. He had even done the same thing with wild mathlabs on Poros. Now he realized how these little creatures felt. But he did not waste any sympathy on himself in his present predicament. He was thinking more of his country than of himself.

Meanwhile he could see the smoke begin to pour in from other directions. Plainly the Formians had set fire to the woods in many different spots, and doubtless were lying in wait for him to rush out between these places. They were planning either to force him out or burn him alive.

The frantic man ran desperately now, starting one way and now another, only to be driven back each time by a cloud of smoke that would blow full in his face and convince him that escape was not to be found in that direction. Oh, if only the impending rain would come!

Soon he could see the flames as well as the smoke. There was a roar which he could hear rising among the trees, for which the wind could not account. The air was becoming warmer, and broken burning branches began to fly over the treetops. The smoke was blinding and choking him now, and met him full in the face in whatever direction he turned. He must do something quickly, if he would cheat the enemy of their triumph.

CHAPTER VII

A WAY OUT

JUST at that moment, through a rift in the smoke, he fancied that he saw the sparkle of water, and toward it he bent his steps. If there really was a stream there,

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it might block the course of the conflagration, and afford safety on its farther bank.

So on and on, amidst the smoke, he sped, with the roar of the fire behind him. His one hope lay in finding the stream and in managing to cross it.

He did not heed the choking sensation in his throat. His own life and the fate of a nation depended on his success. He must find the water.

He had run but a few paraparths when he again caught sight of the water between the trees, for he had been nearer than he had thought. In another moment he gained the bank, but he groaned at the sight. For the opposite shore was also in flames. Evidently the ant men had anticipated his move.

What could he do now? Great volumes of smoke were pouring in on him from behind. The air was full of flying embers, and the heat was becoming almost unendurable. The hunted man had gained the bank of the stream, only to find his escape cut off there by the flames on the other side.

Cabot was facing a double peril, as he fully realized. The Formians who were pursuing him, and who had set these fires, would prove as merciless as the flames in their dealings with him, whom they rightly regarded as the cause of the misfortunes of their nation. Thus either way out of this dilemma appeared to be worse than the other. And still the rain held off.

At this moment a slight shift in the wind drove back the heat behind him. The smoke which now came from across the little river was cool and thin enough to be bearable, and accordingly he quickly determined to stick close to the bank, and to proceed cautiously northward, the direction in which the stream appeared to be flowing.

Perhaps no one was on guard at the place where the stream emerged from the burning area, and he could there make his escape.

But, alas, no such luck! His flight was interrupted by the sight of an ant man, who, as seen through the smoke, loomed twice his natural size.

Cabot took careful aim and fired two shots, at which his enemy crumpled up, but not without first radiating a warning to his fellows. This made it too late to get through at this point, so Cabot turned and retraced his steps upstream.

Finally he came to a place where the fire appeared to be burning only on his own side of the river. Although the current was swift he determined to chance it and swim across, so he waded out into the stream. The cool of the water felt soothing to his dry body, and near the surface the air was clear and free from smoke. Cabot filled his lungs again and again with this blessed air, then stopped to lave his parched lips in the cool stream.

When he raised his head to resume the crossing, what should he see on the opposite shore but two of his black enemies! Firing rapidly at them, he backed up the bank again and lay down under cover of a log.

The Formians now promptly withdrew, and soon were lost in the smoke of several new fires which they had started.

He heard a boom in the distance. What! Were they bombing Luno Castle again? Another boom in a slightly different direction! Where else could they be dropping bombs? And then he realized this must be thunder.

Now the wind shifted again, driving the flames up to Cabot's side of the river and forcing him back into the water. Burning brands came scudding across the surface, so that even the water proved but little protection. However, by making his way upstream, he finally came to a place where the bank overhung, and the brook was about five feet deep. Here the bank protected him from the flying embers, and he was able to breathe the clear air near the surface of the stream. Now the fire could not touch him, even if it should sweep to the very edge of the brook.

The sky got darker and darker. The rain began to descend. The storm, which had been so long threatening, had broken at last, and the rain was falling torrentially. Indeed, it soon was coming down in sheets,

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and Cabot knew that if he could only maintain his position a little longer, he would be saved from the fire, and would then have only the Formians to cope with. The flames in the forest had not been under such headway that they could long withstand such a deluge as was now coming down.

But the rain, by quenching the fire, greatly increased the volume of the smoke, which now came billowing thickly out over the surface of the water. Also the river began to rise. The swollen stream was quickly responding to the addition of the heavy downpour of rain, and Cabot realized that he would soon be driven from his hiding place. Yet if he went ashore in that thick smoke, he would not be able to breathe. He was between the devil and the deep river.

And, to make matters worse, the smoke was settling closer and closer over the water, so that Myles was finally forced to bring his nostrils to within a fraction of an inch of the surface, in order to get any fresh air at all.

As he stood thus, with his nostrils just above the surface of the water, and his eyes smarting with the acrid smoke, the smoke suddenly lifted sufficiently to disclose a large log which the current was carrying swiftly, end-on, directly toward his head. Then, with a crash, it struck.

HOW long or how far the swift current carried him he knew not, but it must have been many stads, for when his eyes finally opened again, the brook had become a river.

He found himself now clinging instinctively to the very log which had dislodged him, and doubtless it was this instinctive act which had saved his life.

After resting a moment, and recovering his wits, he investigated his surroundings. The river was roaring along the bottom of a deep gorge, and right before him rose the face of a steep rocky cliff, against which the river seemed to rush and end, turning neither to the right nor to the left. In a flash it dawned on Cabot where he was. This was "the lost river," a natural phenomenon which had long perplexed the scientists of Poros, and had long been revered by the proletariat as a symbol and emblem of eternity.

"It will undoubtedly mean eternity to me," thought Cabot, "for in a moment I shall strike the face of that cliff, and all will be over."

But, just before he reached the cliff, the log and he were sucked down, down, by some irresistible undertow. He strangled and struggled upward, but the pressure held him down. His lungs were bursting with excruciating pain. His ears hurt. His mouth was filled with blood. Oh, how he longed for the crash against the cliff, which would end it all!

But the crash never came.

He could bear it no longer, yet there was no alternative except to bear it. And then, as suddenly as it had sucked him beneath the surface, the river released its grip on his legs, and he shot upwards, clear of the watery grave. With what joy did he fill his straining lungs with God's fresh air! Again and again he breathed, as he clung to the friendly log, until at last the pain in his throat departed, and he was somewhat his normal self once more.

He was drifting quietly along on the surface of a placid stream. A few moments ago all had been broad daylight, but now all was dark as a Porovian night. Every ripple of the water echoed above and to both sides, thus leading Cabot to infer that he was in some subterranean grotto. So he struck out for the shore.

The shore proved to be a precipitous wall; but finally, after groping along it for a way, he came to a ledge about a foot above the surface, and onto this ledge he pulled himself. Shedding his toga, he wrung it out, and finally massaged himself with it into a state resembling dryness. But his wings and false antennae were gone, and his radio apparatus seemed to be a hopeless mess.

At any rate the air was fortunately not cold in the cave, so he lay down on the ledge and slept.

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CHAPTER VIII

BEASTS OF THE DARK

SO CABOT lay and slept on the narrow ledge about a foot above the surface of the subterranean stream of the caves of the lost river of Kar. His sleep was fitful and troubled by dreams, through which there stalked Formians, and ant-bears, and Prince Yuri, and dead Cupian babies.

Often he would awake with a shriek of horror as some one of the nightmare figures became too realistic. His cry would echo and reverberate throughout distant vaulted arches of the cave, until finally it would vanish amid the dripping and rippling of the waters, and all would be silence again. Then Cabot would drift off once more into troubled sleep.

One of his dreams was that he was lying in the Stillman infirmary at Harvard with cancer of the foot. His was an unusually rapid case, for he could actually watch the progress of the disease. At first the sensations were rather pleasant, as though some one were massaging the foot, while he could see the skin peel off and gradually disappear. But, as the disease worked its way deeper into the tissues, the feeling gradually changed to a mild pain. A heavy weight seemed to be holding his leg motionless, although he could see nothing on the hospital cot to account for it. The bones of his foot now lay exposed, and the blood oozed out between them as though it were being sucked by a vacuum cleaner.

Then suddenly such an intense pain shot through his leg as to cause him to wake with a start, and to jerk his leg and shake it violently as though to rid his foot of the disease. The result was a loud splash in the water close by. Quite evidently some creature had been sucking and gnawing his foot, and had been kicked by him into the quiet stream.

Cabot sprang to his knees. The splashing continued, and indicated that the creature was attempting to crawl out of the water back onto the ledge to finish its rudely interrupted meal. But it was clearly having considerable difficulty in getting a foothold. So Cabot crept in the direction of the sounds and ran his hand along the edge of the ledge. His fingers came in contact with two webbed paws, which did not relinquish their grip at his touch. So, drawing back his hand, he doubled up his fist and then shot it out just above and between the two paws. It struck a slimy snout, which snapped feebly ere it gave way. Then a rippling splash, followed by silence.

Cabot waited for a few moments for the return of the creature. Then examined his foot. It appeared to be bloody and slightly lacerated, but not seriously damaged. His fingers were bruised from their terrific impact with the face of the aquatic monster. He was naked and cold. His toga and radio set were gone. But otherwise he seemed to be all right.

Thoroughly aroused now, he stood erect, stretched his arms and legs, drew a few deep breaths, and engaged in some rapid setting-up exercises. These over, he felt much better, ready in fact to resume his journey. But just how to resume his journey presented considerable of a problem.

Myles laughed grimly to himself as he reflected that now he did not even know in what direction lay the north. How, then, could he continue northward? This question was, of course, absurd. The immediate problem was not one of the points of the compass, but rather was one of getting out of these caves at all. He sat down on the ledge again to think.

Thus he remained for some time, but no bright ideas came. Merely longings for Lilla, grief for the death of their baby son, and despair for the condition of Cupia. But at last he roused himself. This would never do!

A ripple of water drew his attention to the river which flowed by. The river!

"It must flow somewhere," he mused. "Why, probably it even flows north! For that was the direction when I crawled into it to escape the fire set by the Formians. As it entered these grottoes, so must it eventually leave them again. If I swim down stream, there will be no danger of circling, and sooner or later I will either emerge

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into daylight again—or be drowned. But what matter? Drowning won't kill me any deader than starvation on this ledge."

So saying, he dipped his hand into the stream to determine the direction of the current. But, as he did so, a slimy body just beneath the surface brushed his fingertips. Hastily he snatched his hand away. No river for him!

Instead he would walk down stream along the ledge, in the hope that the ledge would persist. At least he could follow the ledge as far as it went, and postpone his plunge into the depths until the ledge ended. So he groped his way cautiously along. The river wound in and out through the cave for over a stad, and the ledge followed it.

But finally Myles came to a place where his groping foot hung in the air. The ledge had abruptly terminated. He drew back his foot and leaned against the wall for a few moments. Then sat down on the ledge, reclined backward to rest his shoulders against the wall, and fell clear over, for there was no wall there. Scrambling quickly to his feet, he bumped his head with a resounding thwack which fell him to the floor again.

For some time he nursed his aching head. As his senses recovered from the shock, he realized that he had fallen through the mouth of a small tunnel which led away at right angles from the river. So into this tunnel he crawled.

In spite of being on his hands and knees, he made faster progress than he had along the ledge, for now there was no danger of falling off into the river, and hence no need of feeling his way so carefully. Thus he pressed rapidly on for quite a distance, in fact until the passageway enlarged and he was able once more to stand erect.

"Yahoo!" he shouted, and the reverberations of his voice showed him that he was in a large vaulted cave, very similar to that through which flowed the river Kar, except that here there was no river. The reverberations were followed by a fluttering noise, like that of a flurry of dried leaves before an October storm. It was as though his earthly voice had had some tangible physical effect in stirring up a disturbance in this grotto. But the exact nature of the disturbance he could not imagine. He did not need to imagine it, however, for in a moment it burst upon him, a fluttering shower of winged creatures about the size of sparrows. But their wings, as they brushed his face—and his hands, which promptly tried to ward them off—appeared to be leathery and cold, rather than warm, and covered with feathers.

"Bats!" exclaimed Cabot, as he reached out and snatched one of the small creatures from the air. But his immediate reward was a sharp bite across one of his fingers, which caused him to drop his captive with an "Ow!"

AS HE again fell to work defending his head, he noted—ever the scientist—that the teeth marks on his injured finger felt as though they extended clear across the two rows on each side. This was not the localized bite of the incisors of a bat. What could these creatures be?

To satisfy his curiosity, he grabbed another one of them from the air, and encircled its jaws with his left hand before it had time to bite him very badly. Then holding it firmly by the head, as it struggled wildly to escape, he ran the fingers of his right hand appraisingly over its body.

Its head was long and rectangular, and much too large for its body, judged by the make-up of earthly flying creatures. Its skin was cold and scaly like that of a lizard. Its wings were bat-like, except that the skin was stretched on a single long finger, instead of on four. The other fingers were short and free, and equipped with sharp claws. The back of the wing, along the arm part, was covered with long feathery scales. The tail was as out of proportion as the head, and sported a fan of scales at its tip. The smell was nauseatingly like that of a snake.

It was evident that he held in his hand a small variety of pterodactyl, apparently similar in every respect to the reptilian

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forerunners of birds on our own planet. But its companions were becoming altogether too numerous and troublesome to leave him any leisure for further scientific investigation of his captive. So, casting it from him, he set about defending himself.

A perfect swarm of the filthy little creatures now encompassed him in the pitch darkness of the cave. They battered against him, and tore at his naked body with their sharp claws and teeth. More and more of them kept arriving, so that it soon became evident that he must escape from them in some way and in some haste, in order to avoid being overpowered.

So, warding them off as best he could with one hand, he turned sharp to the right and groped his way around the wall of the grotto with his other hand.

Finally he came to an opening, which he entered at once. Of course it might be that he had completely circumnavigated the cave, and that this was the same tunnel through which he had entered. Even so, it would be better to return to the ledge and the river, than to be overwhelmed by this rapidly augmenting swarm of pterodactyls. But no, it was not the same tunnel, for it did not grow smaller as he progressed; so, after frantically beating at the bat-like creatures with both hands for a moment, he crossed his arms Boy Scout fashion in front of his face and fled precipitately down the corridor.

This way proved to be practically straight. His outstretched hands prevented any collision with the walls or other obstacles, which otherwise must inevitably have occurred in the pitch darkness. Cabot was not quite as helpless in the dark as most earth men would have been, for he had over three years of experience with the inky, starless Porovian nights.

As he ran on, his tormentors gradually dropped behind him, until finally they were reduced to only two or three more determined members of the breed.

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Cabot accordingly slowed down to a walk. But, just as he did so, one of his feet stepped out into nothingness. With a despairing effort he strove to throw his body backward to safety. He reached out his hands to the sides and then above, groping madly for some support. But all in vain; for, after toppling for it seemed ages on the brink, he pitched over headlong into space—

And struck the surface of a body of water with a resounding splash within a few feet below where he had been standing. The unexpected impact quite took his breath away. He struggled feebly on the surface and groaned until the air flowed into his lungs again. But his relief was supreme at this anticlimactic ending of his fall into an imagined abyss.

When he had fully regained his breath, he struck out for where he thought the shore to be, and was just getting up a good headway when he ran full on into a large, soft, animate form floating idly on the surface. Instantly this creature ceased being idle, and became a thing of action. With a prodigious splashing, it went for Cabot, who warded it off with his hands and feet. He had no idea what it was that he was fighting, but it seemed like several huge rubber windmills. Back, ever back, it forced him, until finally a long snout got by his guard, and two toothless gums closed upon his abdomen, and dragged him beneath the water.

Cabot was an expert swimmer. He had even saved lives on earth. And he knew that the best possible tactics to use when a drowning person drags you under, is to swim down, down, until your incubus lets go in terror. Such tactics, of course, would not work on a subaquatic creature, but the chances were about even that the beast which held him in its deadly grip was an air-breathing denizen of the surface. At any rate, it was worth gambling on, so Cabot struggled downward instead of upward.

This action seemed to puzzle the beast, for it resisted a few moments, then floundered undecidedly, and then let go. Swimming far out to one side, Myles shot upward to the air, and again struck out for the shore. A few short strokes brought him to a ledge, where he hung for a moment to catch his breath. In fact, he would have hung there a little longer than he did, had not a cold and slimy form, brushing across his back, recalled his attention to the perils of the deep.

With a kick of his feet, he chinned himself up to the level of the ledge, bent up one elbow after the other; and then, leaning far inland, threw up his right leg onto the ledge. He was now completely out of the water, except his left leg, which too would be out in another instant. But just at this moment an eel-like body wrapped itself around his left ankle, and began to pull him back into the stream.

He squeezed the edge of the ledge with his two knees, as if he were riding a horse. With the tips of all his fingers he gripped every slight irregularity of the surface of the rock. He devoted every effort to pull himself ashore, but the slimy ophidian pulled just a little more strongly than he.

Gradually, an inch at a time, he was dragged back toward the water, until finally his right leg slid off the ledge with a splash, and he found himself lying face down, bent at the middle at the edge of the ledge, with both legs in the water.

The hauling on his left ankle continued; and, to make matters worse, a similar attachment now fastened itself upon his other ankle as well. With this added enemy, his movement backward and downward now became more rapid. But just then his slipping fingers slid into a crack in the rock, where they were able to take a firm hold. The tables were turned, as the man began slowly to pull himself once more onto the rock.

INCH by inch Cabot regained the ground which he had lost, until with a mighty effort he was able to swing his right leg back onto the ledge again. But with it came the creature of the deeps. How large this creature was, or how long it was, or just what sort of a beast it was, he was unable

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to tell. But, whatever it was, it now anchored itself somewhere on the shore, and there resumed its pulling, so that for the present at least it constituted an ally for the earth-man, who with the aid of this new anchorage, was soon able to roll over onto his right side, thus dragging his left leg and the second aquatic creature up onto the rock.

But, even though he was fully ashore, what good did it do him? For his two enemies seemed as much at home on land as in the water, and even with his hands now free to ward them off, they still had him pretty much at their mercy, for he must needs be very careful lest he roll back again into the river. Gradually these two slimy beasts entwined themselves upward around his body, in spite of all his efforts to hold them back.

Thus battled Myles Cabot, the Minorian, against fearful odds, in pitch darkness, on a narrow ledge overhanging the stygian stream of the Caves of Kar.

He had traveled a thousand stads, and had encountered every kind of a danger, from ant to ant-bear, on the way. He had swum Lake Luno amid the rifle fire of the enemy, only to find his castle sacked, his princess gone, and his baby slain. He knew not how fared his princess or his army. He had been burned out of the woods north of Luno, and had been nearly strangled beneath the waters of the lost river. He had been attacked by pterodactyls and other strange reptiles.

And now he was battling alone and for his life against two powerful and unknown beasts, all in the absolute black darkness of a reverberating cave. Who would ever know, or care, the outcome of that battle?

And yet he never for an instant thought of giving up the struggle. Such was the unconquerable will that had led to the adoption of Poblath's proverb: "You cannot kill a Minorian."

But this proverb seemed due to encounter the exception which should prove the rule, unless help came quickly. And from whence could help come in the Caves of Kar?

By this time the coils had completely enveloped him, hand and foot, so that he could not stir; and then, after a brief pause, the two creatures began slowly to drag him along the ledge.

Suddenly a third creature landed on top of them all. What manner of beast this newcomer was, Cabot did not know, but it soon became evident that it was no friend of the others, and that it intended to contest with them the possession of their prey. For it seized Cabot's body with what appeared to be two hands, and started tearing away the snake coils with what certainly seemed to be still other hands.

What could it be? In all of Poros, Cabot knew of no animal with more than two hands.

As the coils were torn away, Cabot's arms finally became free, and he was able not only to "take a hand" in the struggle, but also occasionally to run his fingers over the paws that gripped him or those that held his snaky enemies. All four extremities of his rescuer resembled human hands, and each of the four had six fingers as in the case of Cupians.

Then Cabot swooned from sheer fatigue, his last thought being to wonder vaguely whether it would after all be any more pleasant to be eaten by this strange new beast than by its predecessors.

CHAPTER IX

THE CAVES OF KAR

MYLES CABOT awoke in bed, presumably his own bed, feeling very comfortable and very tired. For a long time he lingered in that twilight zone which lies between dreamland and reality, dimly conscious of a nightmare series of events, and dimly reassured by the conviction that these events had merely been a nightmare after all, and that everything was well with him and his loved ones.

Then he slept once more, and, when at last he woke again, it was with the clouded brain of high fever. Thus for many days he lay and tossed, and was ministered unto by tender hands, with no very clear realiza-

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tion of where, or even who, he might be.

Occasionally he even imagined that he heard human voices speaking in a strange and alien tongue, which of course was impossible, for Cupians are the only humans on Poros, and they radiate, instead of giving forth audible speech.

Finally, after many days, his brain cleared, and he was able to take an interest in his surroundings. He was alone in a small cell hewn from the solid rock, but equipped with every modern convenience and lighted with electric vapor lamps.

He called aloud, and the walls reverberated; but there came no answer. Of course not for Cupians cannot perceive human speech. But if the inhabitants of these grottoes were Cupians, then how about the spoken words which he was sure he had heard in his delirium?

No one entered. Gradually his mind reconstructed the events which had brought him here, and he realized that he was in the caves of the famous lost river of Kar. No one had ever known that there were such caves, or that the planet Poros had any subterranean inhabitants. But there was a popular legend to the effect that the first man and first woman had arisen from the soil to populate the world, although the more prevalent legend told that these two forerunners of the race had come from another land beyond the boiling seas. Perhaps the first legend was right after all, and Cabot was now in the presence of the remnants of the prehistoric inhabitants of Poros. But, if so, then how explain the culture evidenced by the bed, the other furniture, and the electric lights? He gave it up, and lay back weakly to await some further clew.

Not long did he have to wait, for presently a venerable man entered the room. This man was unmistakably Cupian, for he had the antennae, the lack of ears, the rudimentary wings and the six digits on each hand, which distinguish the human inhabitants of Poros from those of the planet Earth. He was clad, however, in a different style from that prevalent among the Cupians to whom Cabot was accustomed; for, in place of a toga reaching only to the knees, he wore a ground-sweeping gown of many folds, and instead of bare feet, he wore sandals. On the front of his gown was a red triangle. His face had that calm sweet majesty which one sees on the faces of many of the prelates of the Roman Catholic Church.

Producing a pad of paper and a stylus, he wrote in Cupian characters the message: "Good morning, Myles Cabot; I rejoice to see that you have thus far recovered."

Myles stared at the paper with surprise and not a little horror.

"How do you know my name?" he wrote in reply.

"Why not?" the man countered. "Myles Cabot is well known throughout all of Cupia."

"Then I am still in Cupia?" Myles asked.

"You are," the man replied. "To be more specific, you are in the Caves of Kar. But write no more, for you are ill and weak. Lie down and rest."

And he started to take away the pad, but Myles snatched it back and wrote: "If, then, you know so much about the outside world, tell me of the Princess Lilla."

"She is well and safe," the man replied.

"And my army?"

"It is holding its own in the northern mountains."

This time the old man retained the pad, thus leaving his patient speechless.

Next he rang a soundless bell, and there entered one of the strangest creatures which Cabot had ever seen. In general appearance it bore out the same relation to a Cupian as does a small gorilla to a human being on earth. Its head was prognathous and set deep on its shoulders. Its skin was hairless, except on the top of its head, and was the color of bluish slate. Its arms were long and gangling. It stood with a stoop and walked with a shuffle. Like the Cupians, it was earless, and had antennae, rudimentary wings, and six digits on each hand and foot.

In the past Cabot had occasionally heard

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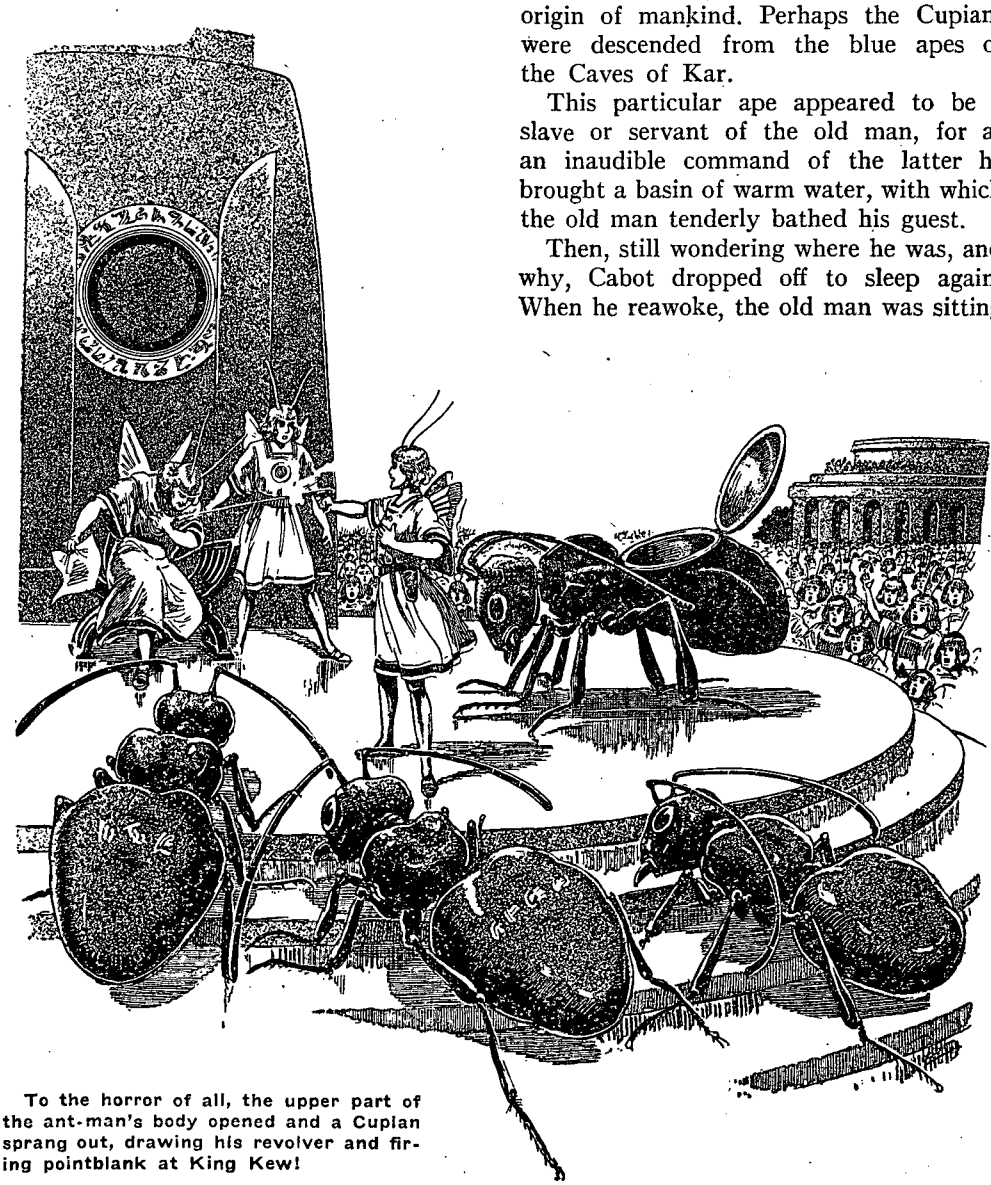
of the legendary blue apes which were sometimes said to be seen emerging from caves in the Okarze Mountains, but never before had he seen one.

Furthermore, the presence and general appearance of this beast afforded a rational explanation of the manner of Cabot's rescue from two aquatic boa-constrictors on the ledge above the river in the subterranean darkness, and of his presence here. His rescuer had had four hands; so had this blue ape.

In the manuscript, which Myles Cabot shot from Venus to the earth in a streamline projectile, and which was published to mankind under the title of "The Radio Man," it was stated that the Cupians had no basis for any Darwinian theory; but now Myles began to doubt that statement of his. Perhaps this was the true scientific basis of the legend of the subterranean origin of mankind. Perhaps the Cupians were descended from the blue apes of the Caves of Kar.

This particular ape appeared to be a slave or servant of the old man, for at an inaudible command of the latter he brought a basin of warm water, with which the old man tenderly bathed his guest.

Then, still wondering where he was, and why, Cabot dropped off to sleep again. When he reawoke, the old man was sitting



To the horror of all, the upper part of the ant-man's body opened and a Cupian sprang out, drawing his revolver and firing pointblank at King Kew!

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in the room, and with him was a younger man, of the same general appearance and garb.

The older handed over the following message: "Myles Cabot, this is Nan-nan, one of our electricians. He is at your service."

At once Cabot caught the drift of these remarks, and wrote back: "Bring me my apparatus, and let us try to repair it."

His two hosts glanced significantly at each other, and Myles began to fear that his radio set had been lost beneath the waves of the river Kar. But no, for an ape slave came bringing it, together with a bench and tools which they placed beside the couch. Then the electrician and Myles set to work.

It took a long time, several sangths in fact, for the earthman was very weak, and all conversation had to be carried on in writing.

THE present occasion reminded Myles of those days at the ant university at Mooni, shortly after his arrival on the planet Venus, when he had struggled for many weary sangths to produce artificial antennae and a portable radio set, in order to see if this would not furnish a means for oral communication with the lovely Lilla, Princess Royal of the Cupians, whom he then worshipped from afar. Before he had completed that experiment, he had had no means of knowing whether or not the beings of this strange planet used radio waves to talk with.

Their own scientists, both Cupian and Formian, had doubted it decidedly; but the earth man had persisted, basing his hopes on the speculations of some American savants, which he had read shortly before his departure from the earth, to the effect that insects communicate with each other by means of exceedingly short Hertzian waves.

In those hectic days at Mooni he had had as his laboratory assistant the youthful Prince Toron, then a slave to the Formians; now he had another youthful Cupian, though evidently of some strange tribe. Now, as then, all conversation had to be carried on by means of pad and stylus. But on the present occasion there were several advantages over Mooni. In the first place, his work was not interrupted by frequent entertainments in his honor, nor by frequent exhibitings of himself to classes of students as a horrible example of what nature can do in an off moment. In the second place, he was now thoroughly familiar with Porovian tools and electrical symbology and equipment. And, in the third place, he was now merely duplicating an apparatus thoroughly tested and understood. But, offsetting these present advantages, was the fact that he was very weak and nervous as the result of his trying experiences during his long journey northward from Kuana to the Caves of Kar, where he now was.

The venerable gentleman, whose name turned out to be Glamp-glamp, hovered constantly around, administering to the bodily needs of his guest, and taking very good care not to let him work long enough at a stretch so as to overtax himself.

Finally the apparatus was fully repaired, and two more Cupians knew the jealously guarded secret of this means of communication.

Cabot's first spoken words were: "Tell me more about my princess."

Of course, Glamp-glamp had already given him in writing, from time to time, a general outline of the happenings at Luno Castle; but the completion of Cabot's artificial speech organs furnished the first real opportunity for an extended story. The following are the events as narrated by the venerable old man:

"Shortly after the news of the birth of your son, the little Prince Kew, had been broadcast from the Luno wireless station, a radiogram was received announcing the assassination of your father-in-law, King Kew the Twelfth, in the Kuana stadium. Princess Lilla was, of course, prostrated by the news, and was in no condition to rise to the situation and assume charge of the affairs of the nation.

"But fortunately there was, among the

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attending physicians, a military man named Emsul, who, though primarily a veterinarian, was present to represent the army. You remember Emsul, don't you?"

"Yes," replied Cabot; "he tended my pet buntlote, Tabby, the time she died. He was just about to arrive at Lake Luno when I left for the fatal Peace Day exercises in the stadium. But go on with the story."

"As I was saying," continued Glamp-glamp, "Emsul, by virtue of his military title—"

"Merely a bar-pootah," mused Myles aloud.

"—took command in the name of the infant king, and proclaimed a state of siege. No boats were permitted on the face of the lake, except those emanating from one certain landing place, at which a guard was posted to make careful examinations of all wishing to pass or repass. Notices were put up in the near-by towns, calling on the inhabitants to rally to the banner of little King Kew. The appeal met with practically a unanimous response—for you are very popular with the hill folk, O! Myles Cabot—with the result that Emsul was able to garrison the towns, to man Luno Castle, and to throw a strong cordon around the lake.

"Toward the close of the day of the assassination word came that the traitor, Prince Yuri, supported by his black hordes from beyond the pale, was in full control of the capital. But from that time on no further news arrived at Luno."

"I think I know why," interjected the earth man, "for, on my way up here, I found the apparatus in one of the radio relay stations totally wrecked."

The old man went on:

"The first sign of the forces of Yuri was the arrival of a fleet of airships from the south, early in the morning two days later. Some of the ships flew yellow pennants and some black, the flags of Yuri and his ant allies. What delayed this fleet is a mystery; for, assuming that they left Kuana shortly after the assassination, they ought by rights to have reached Luno that evening, instead of a day and a half later. But, whatever the cause of this delay, it was indeed most fortunate, for it gave Emsul sufficient time to consolidate the country around your castle in behalf of your son.

"ANOTHER fortunate occurrence was the presence near by of an antiaircraft gun. This part of the Okarze Mountains had recently been the scene of numerous and frequent attacks by huge whistling bees on the green cows of the farmers, and accordingly an antiaircraft gun, mounted on a kerkool, had been dispatched from Kuana only about a sangth before, for the purpose of combating these predatory creatures, and of putting a stop to the bovicides. One of Emsul's first official acts had been to requisition this engine of destruction and to station it on the southern shore of the lake.

"Yuri and his naval officers evidently were unaware of this, for the planes flew in bombing formation straight at Luno Castle, so low as almost to be within rifle shot. But, just as they topped the edge of the lake, the trained gun crew let loose at them. Three are now sunk in the lake, one was shot down on shore and captured, and the rest beat a hasty retreat toward Kuana."

"But where was Poblath, the philosopher, all this while?" interrupted Myles.

"Give him time," replied Glamp-glamp. "Give him time! It is a thousand stads from Kuana to Luno, four full days' travel by kerkool. By going night and day, Poblath with the jail kerkools made it in a little over two days, arriving late at night on the same day as that of the repulse of the attack of Yuri's planes. The arrival of these newcomers was the first intimation that those at the lake had had that any opposition was being made to Yuri's control. The news greatly heartened your forces, and they accordingly determined to hold out to the utmost.

"After the mango and his men had rested, Poblath assumed command by virtue of his rank, designating Emsul as chief of staff, in recognition of his services. The

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former's philosophical wit did much to put every one in good humor, and even relieved the princess of some of her anxiety. And you may be sure that Bthuh, Poblath's wife, who was in attendance on the princess, was glad to see her husband.

"Two days later the vanguard of Yuri's forces arrived by kerkool at a point several stads south of the lake, but were repulsed. Nevertheless, as reenforcements kept coming up, Yuri's army finally numbered about the same as the loyal mountaineers. Both sides thereupon dug in and waited."

"But what of the Formian air navy?" asked Cabot.

"It was being kept busy suppressing your supporters in other parts of the kingdom," was the reply. "Besides, they doubtless feared the antiaircraft gun.

"Thus matters remained at a deadlock until forty days after the assassination, by which time the ant forces had become sufficiently augmented to dare launch a general attack. But, just as this was in progress, the army of Buh Tedn, which all this time had been marching north from Kuana, arrived with thousands of recruits which they had gathered on the way, and attacked the Formians in the rear. Needless to state, the entire ant force was wiped out."

"Something to be thankful for," interjected Myles, with a grin.

The old man continued:

"But Buh Tedn scarcely had time to communicate to the castle the disheartening news of your death at the Kuana barricade forty days before, when an overwhelming force of Formians and renegade Cupians, led by Yuri and the black queen in person, fell upon him in turn. Accompanying this force was a large detachment of the air navy. It was too much. Gradually the Kew army was forced northward, up to Lake Luno, past Lake Luno, into the woods beyond, into the very mountains under which we now sit in these caves.

"Yuri then besieged Luno Castle, for the Princess Lilla and the baby King had had no opportunity to leave it during the battle. Under threat of airplane bombardment the defenders finally surrendered, on the strength of Yuri's solemn promise to harm no person, to take only Lilla back to Kuana, to maintain her there as befitted her royal rank, and to permit all others free passage to join your army For the safety of the infant king, and on Poblath's advice, the princess consented. So Yuri sent a strong detachment over by boat to carry out his promise."

"Did he carry out his promise?" asked the earth man.

"He did," replied his host with a peculiar gleam in his eye.

"Then, *who* killed my baby?" exclaimed Cabot.

CHAPTER X

TREACHERY

"WHO killed your baby?" replied the venerable old man of the Caves of Kar. "I will tell you. Even such a traitor as the renegade Yuri would not dare to violate his solemn oath. He had sworn to harm no person. Yet little Kew stood between him and a coveted throne. What could he do under such circumstances? Only a diabolical brain, like that possessed by Yuri, could conceive of the solution which he concocted. In his capacity as king and hence interpreter of all laws, he interpreted his own promise as follows—"

"Yes, yes! Go on!" exclaimed Cabot, exasperated. "Don't keep me in suspense."

"I was just about to tell you when you interrupted me," resumed Glamp-glamp in a mildly reproving tone. "Prince Yuri ruled that, because little Kew was your son, and because you are a beast from another world, therefore little Kew was a beast, likewise, and so was not a 'person,' strictly speaking, and so did not come within the literal scope of the protection of the promise, which was 'to harm no *person.*' Having ruled thus, the miscreant then proceeded to stab the baby through the heart with his own hands."

"The villain!" hissed Cabot, clenching his fists. But what could a mere earth man do against such a schemer?

Glamp-glamp went on with his story:

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"He left his jeweled dagger sticking in the death wound which it had made, sneeringly remarking: 'Thus, with the seal of my family, I seal the deed which makes me King of Cupia.' So came King Yuri the First to the Cupian throne."

"Not yet, by a long shot!" exclaimed the earth man, with a sudden burst of loyalty and affection toward the man whom he had wrongly suspected all this while, "for you forget Prince Toron. The Assembly long ago canceled Yuri's title to the crown because of his treason in the Great War of Liberation. The succession they awarded to his younger brother, the loyal Toron. So Yuri's foul deed made Toron king, unless"—and here a horrible fear clouded Cabot's firmament—"unless Toron is among the missing."

"You have spoken well," replied the old man, "for Toron truly is among the missing. He has not been seen or heard of since the assassination of the old king."

Myles groaned. Then he remembered something which, in fact, had scarcely been absent from his thoughts for as much as a paraparth ever since he had found the body of his murdered son in the banquet hall at Luno Castle. It is remarkable how a fact which you remember in one connection will often fail to suggest itself in another connection, although equally pat. This is doubtless for much the same psychological reason as is set forth in the following proverb of Poblath, the philosopher: "A face well known to you in Kuana is oft a stranger in Ktuth."

So, in the present instance, the note which Cabot had found, signed by the name of Toron and pinned to the baby's bier by a jeweled dagger, had suggested so vividly to Cabot that Toron might perhaps be the actual murderer, that he had failed to grasp the really more obvious significance of the note, namely, that Toron had come at least as far as Luno alive and well. This latter significance now dawned on the earth man for the first time, and hurriedly he imparted the information to his aged host.

"It is well," Glamp-glamp replied, "for if Toron got that far, doubtless he *has* reached, or *will* reach, your army. Almost would I think that he came from your planet Minos, for, as Poblath says: 'You cannot kill a Minorian.' "

"But we have strayed far from the story you were telling," said the Minorian himself. "You had just related how that accursed yellow Yuri murdered my little son. What then?"

Glamp-glamp resumed his tale: "The attendants of the princess at once attacked the forces of Yuri for his duplicity, but were driven into the lake. Yuri then sped to the southward with his prize, and the surviving loyalists, led by Poblath and Emsul, retreated north to join your army. Since then the ant men have consolidated all the territory from Kuana to a point just north of Lake Luno, but have not been able to penetrate very far into the mountains. The princess is safe, and is respectfully treated in Kuana."

Cabot heaved a sigh of relief. Then a suspicion clouded his mind.

"How do you know all this?" he asked, to which Glamp-glamp replied enigmatically, "The holy father knows everything."

"Who is this 'holy father,' " Cabot interrogated, "and who are all of you?"

The reply was astounding, for it revealed a bit of the history of Poros which somehow had never before come to Cabot's attention:

"We are the lost religion of this planet. Innumerable ages ago, we sprang from the ground, fully formed and possessed of the only true key to the mysteries of the universe. From our ranks came the Cupians, who were destined by the Master Builder to populate this continent. But the leaders of the faith remained within the Caves of Kar, as you see us to-day, excepting those of us who went forth to officiate at the temples of the Cupians.

"Then came the first Great War, which resulted in the enslavement of Cupia. Queen Formis, with the assistance of King Kew the First, decreed the razing of our temples and death to all our priests, and the true religion vanished from the face of Poros.

"So, for many generations, we have

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watched and waited in our mountain strongholds, for the great liberator whose coming was fore-ordained. When you appeared from the Planet Minos and overthrew the ant empire, we still waited, for the prophecy of your coming had also contained the warning that we must remain in hiding until you shall have destroyed the last Formian. This you have not yet done. And this you must do, ere the true religion can be reestablished."

That certainly was an antenna-full!

"What assurance have you that I will restore your spiritual dominion over Poros?" Cabot asked. "For I worship the God of Minos."

"We ask no assurance, and we need none," Glamp-glamp replied, "the Great Architect of the Universe, call him by what name you will, has sent you to redeem Poros, and that is enough for us. In due course you will reestablish His religion."

Such calm faith! Cabot was almost convinced himself. Then a new suspicion clouded his firmament.

"Am I a prisoner as hostage for this scheme?" he asked.

"The Builder forbid!" the old priest exclaimed. "You are our honored guest, and are free to go as the winds. But first we must be sure of your complete recovery, for we have much at stake in your well-being."

Cabot was instantly sorry that he had spoken so; and humbly apologized. But the priest would have none of it.

"Under the circumstances," he said, "your suspicions were entirely justified."

Just then a blue ape entered the room with a message. The priest read the note, and then informed Cabot that he was to be granted an audience forthwith by the holy father.

CABOT was washed, shaved and dressed in a clean Cupian toga, and then led, with steps feeble from his long illness, through many corridors to a door on which his conductor knocked several times. The knock was repeated from within, and the door swung slowly open, admitting them to a gorgeous vaulted hall, paved with precious stones, flanked with gold-chased pillars, and lighted on three sides by electric lamps in the shape of equilateral triangles. The hangings were magnificent tapestries in cloth of gold, platinum, copper and other metals, depicting early traditional scenes in the history of the planet.

About fifty priests, dressed like Cabot's conductor, were seated along the walls, some on special raised thrones; and in the center of the opposite side, on a raised platform, sat the leader of the faith, Owva, the holy father, who was the only cowled figure in the room. Owva's face was the most serene and to-be-trusted that Myles Cabot had ever seen on any human being. One look at that face, and all Myles's troubles passed away.

The holy father inspired him, as a mother inspires a child, to absolute trust and confidence in the future.

But Cabot's perverse Americanism led him to stand erect with arms folded, as his conductor made humble obeisance and motioned to him to do likewise. Myles Cabot was the Regent of Cupia; why should he do homage to the church? Then he remembered that his claim to the regency lay buried in the courtyard of Luno Castle. And then he felt thoroughly ashamed of his grossness, for the holy father descended from the throne and bowed low to *him*, saying:

"Welcome to Kar, Myles Cabot, defender of the faith."

Ever these priests were teaching Cabot manners. He now bowed low in turn himself, and stammered out some kind of an apology.

The holy father reascended the throne and gave his guest the seat of honor on his left hand, where they conversed for several minutes, before he introduced Cabot to the assembly.

"Priests of the true religion," said Owva, "ye all recall the prophecy, how from the very moment when our ancestors and predecessors in title sprang from the soil to people the planet Poros, we have known that our religion was doomed to be wiped

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from the face of the continent by an alien race. That sad event in the history of the true religion came to pass five hundred years ago, when Formia overran our fair planet.

"Ye also know that the prophecy continued by stating that after many generations there should come a beast from another world, to redeem Cupia, and restore us to our pristine power. 'Fight fire with fire, and beasts with beasts.' Permit me to present to you Myles Cabot, the beast from Minos. The vanquisher of the Formians. The hero of Poros. I have spoken."

"Priests of Kar," said Myles (just barely restraining himself from saying, "Priests of the true religion"), "it is reassuring to me to meet such an abiding faith in the destinies of Poros. Strengthened by your tender ministrations, I go forth to redeem the planet with your assistance. May God's will be done."

There was a rustle of disapproval at the mention of a strange Supreme Being, but the holy father silenced them with a gesture. Then he signed to Cabot that the interview was at an end, and Cabot returned to his room.

A few days later Myles was pronounced well enough to leave the subterranean city. First he bid an affectionate farewell to Glamp-glamp, who had tended him through all his illness. Then, gathering up his belongings, he set forth through many a winding passage, under the leadership of the young electrician-priest, Nan-nan, who had shed his red-embroidered robe and now had on instead an ordinary Cupian toga for the occasion. Both men wore sandals on their feet, as had become customary in military circles, although the inhabitants of Poros normally went barefoot.

As they neared the outer air, Cabot was blindfolded and thereafter for several stads submitted to the guidance of a hand beneath his arm.

Finally they halted and the bandage was removed. They were now standing in dense woods at the foot of a steep hill, up the side of which ran a winding path.

Nan-nan thus instructed Cabot: "Follow that road for about three stads, keeping yourself thoroughly prepared all the way to halt the moment you are so commanded. Somewhere *en route* you will be challenged by a Cupian sentinel. When asked your identity, say 'Arta,' and make a sign like this."

Here he indicated a sign with his hands, then continued: "Be very guarded in your remarks. May the Great Architect bless you. Good-by."

"Hold on for a paraparth," ejaculated Cabot, seizing the young priest by the arm. "You can't let me go blindly like this. This method of procedure may appeal to your sense of intrigue or your love of mystery, but surely it is highly impractical to send me into enemy territory with absolutely no disguise, and no intimation as to who I am supposed to me, or how I am supposed to act."

Nan-nan mildly remonstrated, "As to who you are supposed to be, I have already informed you that you are 'Arta.' As to how you are supposed to act, I have already instructed you, when challenged by any sentinel, to give your name and show the sign."

"But who is Arta," expostulated Myles, "and why all the hocus pocus?"

"Ah," replied the priest, "the less you know, the less secure you will feel. And the less secure you feel, the more careful you will be. Is it not so?"

"I suppose so," assented the earth-man grudgingly.

"Then," said his mentor, "Good-by. And may the Builder bless you."

And patting Cabot's cheek, he turned and strode off down the path whence they had come. Myles drew his revolver and a deep breath, and set out resolutely to scale the hill ahead. But he walked slowly, although steadily, for his strength was not yet all that it should be.

Thus about a parth passed, when suddenly from in front of him came the words: "Stop, in the name of the king!"

A Cupian stood before him with a revolver in his left hand. For a moment they sized each other up.

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Then "Which king?" Cabot asked.

The sentinel answered, "Yuri, ruler of Cupia."

CHAPTER XI

WITH THE ARMY

FOR a moment Myles was dumfounded. Almost he fired. Then, remembering his instructions, "Arta," he said, and made the sign.

"It is well," the sentinel replied, lowering his gun. "Come, I will conduct you."

Where the sentinel was to lead him, the Lord only knew, but Cabot trusted in the foresight of the priests, and followed.

The fellow proved a most loquacious guide, so that Myles had little difficulty to remain reticent. The guide started talking almost at once.

"From the capital?" he asked.

"No," Myles replied, "what is the news from the capital?"

The sentinel smiled a sagacious smile.

"Yuri reigns over Cupia," said he, "and beside him on the throne sits Formis, the black hag of the ants. Surely you have heard the ribald jests which this has caused among both races?"

Cabot shook his head.

"Too many damned ants in this country now," the Cupian continued, "but we have been given to understand that this is only a temporary measure. Of course King Yuri cannot know whom to trust among his own people—I hope that I have not offended?"

"Not at all," said Cabot. "Go on."

"I don't know that there is much more to say. Our leaders tell us that Cabot the Minorian is the cause of all our troubles. But for my own part, I share the belief of most of the common soldiers that he was a great patriot. I can say this without treason, now that he is dead. May he rest beyond the seas! But I talk too much; that is always my failing. Do I offend?"

"Certainly not," Cabot replied. "In fact, I share your belief to a large extent. But just how did the Minorian die?"

"They burned him to death in the woods north of Luno. No man could live in that blaze, and he was completely surrounded. But they never found his body. Not that I doubt his death," he added hastily, "still there be many who say that Cabot is supernatural. And there is ample grounds for that belief. Did he not vanquish a whistling bee alone and single-handed at Saltona? Did he not escape alive from the Valley of the Howling Rocks, after his ant executioners had actually seen him perish because of the terrible din, and after he had been pronounced officially dead? Did he not slay a woofus in the woods south of Kuana? In the present war, was he not killed at the barricade north of the capital, only to show up alive forty-three days later at Lake Luno? All of these events are evidence pointing to the conclusion that Cabot is not mortal. And, unless he be supernatural, how did he ever get to this planet in the first place, from Minos, twenty-five million stads away through space? Answer me that. But I mustn't talk so much."

"Go right on," said Myles, "though, of course, I cannot agree with you that this Cabot person is any different from the rest of us."

This started the guide off on a new track, an anatomical discussion of earth-born peculiarities, while Cabot permitted his attention to center on wondering whither he was being led and why. Great were the ramifications of the lost religion!

The guide discussed how this remarkable Cabot person, being a Minorian, had strange mushroomy growths at the sides of his head, the use of which, if any, was vague and uncertain, but apparently something like that of antennae. Also, how he had no real antennae and no vestigial wings, as he ought to have if he were a veritable Cupian.

But mostly, the guide dwelt on the fact that this Cabot had five fingers on each hand, instead of the proper six. At these remarks, Cabot himself carefully hid both of his tell-tale hands in the folds of his toga. His artificial wings, his electrical antennae, his sandals, and the locks of hair which concealed his ears, all served as a perfect disguise, provided that he could

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keep his hands from being seen. But the guide was too intent on his own conversation to notice anything, even if Myles had not taken this precaution. So he rambled on, as they wended their way through the mountains.

Around noon they stopped to mess with a small encampment of Cupians. As they waited for the meal to be served, they sat down on the crest of a slope overlooking a fertile valley, at the other side of which rose a range of hills.

The guide indicated these hills with a wave of his hand and said, "Thither lies our enemy, on whom you have been sent to report."

So that was what this trip was supposed to be for.

"Tell me," said Myles, "their condition."

The guide turned inquiringly to one of the other Cupian soldiers and explained: "This is Arta, a messenger on reconnaisance. He has the sign, so you may tell him all."

Whereat the soldier stated: "Know then that those hills beyond that valley hold a force of Cupians which greatly outnumber us. The enemy are too scattered and too little is known of their exact disposition to enable us to bomb them out by airplane. But on the other hand, our complete control of the air prevents them from attacking us. We are rapidly completing a topographical survey by airplane. New planes are arriving from Mooni as fast as the factories there can turn them out. And ant reenforcements are arriving as fast as kerkools can bring them up. The stage is nearly set for the victorious advance of King Yuri, and for the end of the pretendership of his brother Toron. But, of course, being from headquarters, you know all this; what you now want is details. Is not that so?"

Just then the food arrived, bowls of alta and green milk. The guest was served first.

Instinctively Cabot extended his hand to accept the proferred bowl, and instinctively the soldier with whom he had been talking followed his movement with his eyes. All too late Cabot realized what he had done; for there, exposed before them, was a right hand with no counterpart on all Poros, a hand with only five fingers, not six, the hand of Cabot, the earth-man.

Simultaneously the two sprang to their feet, overturning the bowls of food, as the Cupian soldier shrieked: "Not Arta, but Cabot! Cabot the Minorian has come to life again!"

Out shot the right fist of the earth-man and tumbled the soldier in the dust. Then, before the rest of the astounded company had time to grab their rifles, Cabot had leaped from their midst and was rushing down the grassy slope to the valley below. A volley of shots followed him, and then the chase began.

But his earthy agility stood him in good stead, in spite of his weakness, for he covered the ground much more rapidly than his pursuers, and finally cleared at one bound the brook at the bottom, whereas they were forced to halt and ford it. But this halt brought forth several more volleys of bullets, one of which nicked the lobe of his ear, where the tiny ear-phone failed to cover it.

Cabot smiled grimly as he raced up the opposite slope. He could never repay that outrage, for Cupians have no ears.

AT LAST he dropped panting in a little ravine which shielded him from his pursuers, whom he was confident would not dare to penetrate thus far into enemy territory.

But a peremptory cry of "Halt!" brought him suddenly to his feet again. He found himself looking into the muzzle of a Cupian rifle.

"I *am* halted," he replied somewhat testily.

"Then stay halted," countered the Cupian, "in the name of the king."

"Which king, O! sentinel?" asked the earth-man.

To which there came back the answer: "Toron, rightful ruler of all Poros."

"Thank God," exclaimed Cabot, dropping once more to the ground, "for I am Myles Cabot."

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At last he had reached his journey's end!

The sentinel hastily summoned assistance, and their exhausted leader was carried on a litter to army headquarters, where Buh Tedn, Poblath and the others crowded around him and patted his cheek with every expression of joy at his deliverance, Poblath exclaiming jovially: "I told you they could never kill a Minorian!"

Even Hah Babbuh was there, too. How he had gotten there, when he was supposed to be holding the Kuana jail as a nucleus for the loyal elements at the capitol, was a mystery to Cabot, but the earthman had not time to inquire, for other matters of more immediate importance now engrossed his attention.

Hah was in charge of the loyal forces; and Myles, because of his weakened condition, permitted his friend to retain the active command, which otherwise would have reverted to him as field-marshal of Cupia.

While the greetings were in progress, who should enter but Prince Toron! It was instantly evident that he had not been informed of Cabot's arrival and was taken by complete surprise. So much so, in fact, that the young fellow appeared embarrassed and confused. The earth-man sensed this, and immediately there was reawakened in his breast the suspicion which had been born when he had read Toron's note pinned by the dead body of the baby king, but which had been stilled for a time by the plausible story told by the priests of the lost religion in the Caves of Kar.

Accordingly the greetings between these two were a bit formal and stilted.

After the cheek-patting between them was over, Myles controlled his voice as much as possible, and asked: "Your majesty, does your majesty happen to know anything about the death of my son, the baby king?"

Toron started, and his face darkened.

"Were you at Luno Castle?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Cabot grimly.

"Then did you not find the body, and the note pinned with a dagger?"

"Yes," said his inquisitor. "That was what aroused my curiosity."

"But the note told the facts," exclaimed the startled young prince.

"Yes?" said Myles. "And, as I remember it, the words were merely: 'This is what did the deed. I came too late.—Toron, King of Cupia.' That explains nothing. It does not even state *who* killed little Kew."

Cabot snapped his words short with an air of finality. A look of horror gradually spread over Toron's face, as he stared at the other.

"My Builder!" he exclaimed, "you don't mean to say you think that *I* did it."

"This is treason!" Hah Babbuh declared in a determined tone.

"Now see here," interjected Poblath soothingly, "let's get this straight. I don't believe that our good friend from Minos is quite himself after all his hardships, but I can assure him that I saw the blow struck, and that Prince Toron had not then even arrived at Luno."

Toron and Cabot both collapsed limply, and looked at each other with pity in their eyes.

"I, too, have suffered and am not myself," said the young prince in extenuation.

"Toron, cousin of my wife, forgive me," replied Myles.

Whereat Poblath, the philosopher, to relieve the strained situation, hastily suggested: "Come, Myles Cabot, tell us all that has happened to you these many days since we last saw you in my mangool at Kuana."

Cabot roused himself.

"But no," said he, "for I want first to hear the tale of my good friend Prince—er, King—Toron."

"Yes, yes, tell him," said Poblath hurriedly.

The boyish contender for the throne looked inquiringly around the circle, and, receiving several nods of approval, began:

"It happened this way, Myles. The instant that my uncle was shot dead by my murderous brother at the Peace Day exercises, my first thought was of my beloved cousin, the Princess Lilla. I did not even stop to consider that the assassination had

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given me a claim to the throne. If I had paused, it might have occurred to me that the proper place to strike a blow for her safety was right there in the stadium, in an attack on the pretender Yuri. But, as it was, I had but one idea: Northward!"

"I have had that idea myself," Cabot interjected with a smile.

The tension was broken, Poblath remarking dryly, "Great minds think alike."

"So," the boy continued, "I rushed for the nearest exit, and gained my own plane before the fighting in the stadium got really under way. But, as I helicoptered up into the air, I noted that my fuel tanks were nearly out of alcohol. This meant stopping at the nearest filling-station, and a delay of many precious paraparths. Nevertheless there was no alternative.

"The keeper of the station did not recognize me, but, noticing our family crest on the machine, he asked: 'A supporter of Yuri?'

"This gave me an idea.

" 'You, too?' I replied.

"He assented.

" 'Then, in the name of the Great Architect, lend me a rifle and a yellow pennant, so that I may join his forces in safety.'

"He readily complied. In fact, he seemed to know all about the *coup*. And thus it happened that I rose into the air, flying the accursed colors of the new dynasty. But, even as my plane left the ground, there passed overhead a Formian fleet of bombers headed northward, undoubtedly bound for Lake Luno on some devilish errand. It was up to me to interfere."

"You mean to say," interjected Myles, "that you dared to tackle, single-handed, a whole squadron of Mooni-trained ant men?"

Toron shrugged his youthful shoulders.

"Why not?" said he. "I am a graduate of the ant-university. It would be a good lark. 'A Cupian can only die once, so he might just as well die happily,' as Poblath here would say. Besides," and his face hardened, "it was necessary for my cousin Lilla's sake. So up I went and after them.

"My newly acquired yellow banner gave me free passage into the very midst of the fleet. And then I let loose with the rifle. Oh, it was fun, to see the black beasts drop. My only regret was that I didn't have explosive bullets, like those which we used in the War of Liberation.

"Of course," ruefully, "eventually they shot me down, but it was a great fight while it lasted."

"Were you hurt?" asked the earth-man.

"Oh, no," the boy replied, "they merely got my fuel tank, and so I was able to make a fair landing one hundred stads or so north of Kuana. But down they all came on top of me."

"And captured you?" inquired Myles.

CHAPTER XII

THE TROUBLES OF TORON

"NO, THE ant-fliers did not capture me, replied the young Prince Toron, "for when they punctured my fuel tank, I flut-

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tered down and landed in a tree in some thick woods. Of course this wrecked my plane; but that didn't matter, for the machine was no good anyhow without any fuel, and where could I have my tank repaired or get any alcohol, with the whole country plunged in civil war?

"The ants, however, had good cause to conserve their planes, and so must needs land in a field at some distance from me, in order to pursue me. If they had only had sense enough to drop a few bombs on my tree, they would have had me then and there, and the succession to the throne would have been infinitely simplified. But luckily they tried to capture me. Undoubtedly they had by this time figured out who I was, and had decided that I would be a worthwhile prize to bring back alive to my loving brother.

"I remained in the tree until I saw them hover down to the ground, and thus knew what their plans were; then, shedding my toga, I hastily rigged up a dummy of myself, left it in the cockpit, and clambered down the tree. The branches were close, and the foliage thick, so that climbing up that tree would be absolutely impossible for a creature so large as a Formian.

"Yet my dummy body high aloft looked so natural from the ground, that I was sure that the enemy would try to ascend, and would finally resort to chopping, or even gnawing it down, in order to capture me. They had landed to the north of my position, for the evident purpose of cutting off any further advance on my part, so I set out as nearly due west as I could, lining up one tree after another to keep from traveling in a circle, until finally I came to the main highway which runs north from Kuana."

"But what good did it do you?" interrupted Cabot. "You were stark naked, weren't you?"

"Naked as the day I was born," Toron replied. "A dainty situation for a prince of the royal house to be in! But I had scarcely reached the road when night fell. The dense Porovian darkness would serve as my toga for the present, and also would enable me to avoid any approaching kerkools by virtue of the warning radiance cast by their headlights, even before those lights themselves became visible. You see, Cabot, I cannot hear a kerkool, as I could an airplane, for kerkools have trophil engines, which do not radiate, and I do not possess those funny cups on the side of my head, with which you exercise that uncanny earth-sense that enables you to hear things which make no sound. So it is only at night that I could be safe from approaching cars.

"Of course, travel by night was most difficult. I fell off the road many times and bruised myself considerably. Yet there was nothing for me to do but press on to the northward."

Cabot smiled reminiscently at the word.

"And so," the young prince continued, "I kept on. I remember figuring out, during one period of rest after a particularly severe fall from the road, that it would take me at least ninety days to reach Lake Luno at the rate at which I was going. But still I pressed on, for there was no alternative.

"Just before daybreak I reached a town, and started to skirt around its edges; but I became terribly involved in some outlying lanes and alleys. Soon I found myself hemmed-in in a narrow street. By groping my way from one side to the other, I discovered that there were high fences on each side, therefore I continued on down this alley. It twisted and turned so that I kept bumping against the fences, and finally had no very clear idea of direction. And then, to add to my discomfiture, a dull glow gradually diffused the air behind me, thus showing that a kerkool was slowly picking its way down the same street. Naturally I started to run, and equally naturally I hadn't gone far when I collided head-on with a fence. The shock hurled me to the ground, and supplied me with plenty of light for a few moments, only it was light which didn't do me much of any good.

"But just as the kerkool rounded the turn behind me, I groped my way to my

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feet, and luckily in so doing I found a door in the fence against which I had just run. It was unlocked. In another instant I was through, with the door carefully shut.

"I felt for some bolt or bar, but there was none, so I set out carefully at right angles to the fence. The light from the kerkool now so filled the street that I could see my way dimly. The place was some sort of garden, either vegetable or flower. I was standing in a bed, but I quickly stepped out and hurried down one of the paths. Meanwhile the kerkool had stopped outside, but for what reason I could not imagine. I doubt if the driver heard me, for I had radiated nothing since entering the garden; but perhaps he had seen me as I passed through the gate."

"Perhaps the gate made a noise," suggested Myles mildly.

"Of course not. Gates don't radiate," Prince Toron scornfully replied, then laughed, "I forgot. You can hear gates and all sorts of other noiseless sounds; but we Cupians, who have no mushrooms on the sides of our faces, are not so gifted.

"Well, as I was saying, the kerkool stopped, and presently the gate opened, letting a flood of light through into the garden. Then I did run indeed. But, as I heard no radiations behind me, I could not tell whether or not I was pursued. As I ran, and as I got farther and farther away from the fence, my surroundings became dimmer and dimmer, until I could scarcely see, when suddenly there loomed up in front of me a long row of ghostly figures gesticulating wildly, though in perfect silence, and shifting uneasily about, without however disturbing their perfect alignment. My escape was completely cut off. At once I stayed my headlong flight. But my new enemies did not advance upon me, nor did they utter a sound. It was most uncanny!

"Glancing furtively behind me I could see that the distant gate still stood open and that the figure of an ant man was silhouetted in the light which flooded through it. So there was no turning back. The line of enemies in front of me still maintained their positions, and still kept up their restless motions. Most of them stood nearly shoulder to shoulder, but between two of them was a gap several paces wide, and through this gap I suddenly plunged, intending to take them by surprise.

"But it was evidently a trap, for just as I passed through, a slipnoose tightened about my throat and I was thrown backward to the ground. With my last fading consciousness, I could see my enemies about to pounce upon me."

Toron paused in his narrative, and smiled mysteriously.

"Yes, yes, go on," said Myles eagerly; but still the prince maintained his silence, with a twinkle in his clear blue eyes.

"Go on," Myles impatiently repeated. "What sort of folks were these? I have seen many strange sights since my advent on your planet, but never have I seen any group of Cupians stand in a row at night and sway back and forth like trees. Who were they, and what did they do to you when they captured you?"

CHAPTER XIII

TORON CONTINUES HIS STORY

BUT still the young prince did not reply. Myles Cabot glanced around the little group and saw that they all were grinning broadly. They had heard the story before.

Cabot turned back to Toron again and urged, "Go on. You have just said that, as you dashed through the row of ghostly figures, some one lassoed you around the neck. What happened then?"

"What happened then?" replied the prince tantalizingly. "The next thing that I knew the red light of morning was flooding the eastern sky. I was lying naked on the ground in a garden, while just above me stretched a clothesline with a row of Cupian togas fluttering in the breeze. These were the ghostly row of sentinels of the night before, and the rope which had cut off my wind so summarily had not been a lasso at all, but merely the clothesline itself."

Myles looked very uncomfortable and sheepish as a general laugh went up at his expense. Then he declared: "Toron, you

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are a first class story-teller, and you certainly had me fooled. Did it really happen?"

"Honestly," the boy replied.

And Poblath added: "It couldn't have been better if he had made it up."

Then Toron went on with the narrative of his adventures: "The clothesline was Builder-sent in my then naked condition. Hastily grabbing one of the togas from off the rope, I donned it and hurried out of the garden, just as the morning life began to stir in the little village. Before folks had fully awakened for the day's round of pleasures and work, I had gained the fields and the woods beyond, and there I slept throughout the day.

"Just before nightfall, I found some red clay with which to dye my telltale yellow hair, and then set out once more to grope my weary way northward through the jet black night. Thus I kept on for several days of sleep and nights of travel, until one night a kerkool rounded a turn too quickly for me and deluged me with its light before I had time to scuttle into the woods. Scuttle I did, however, and soon several flash lamps appeared among the trees in pursuit.

"The lights of my enemies showed me their whereabouts and thus enabled me to dodge them. But on the other hand, I could not see to find my way, whereas they could; with the result that finally they surrounded me. There were four of them, four Formians. I was unarmed. 'Foolhardiness is not courage,' as Poblath would say. So I surrendered. Luckily they did not recognize me."

"Why should they," Cabot remarked, "without your yellow curls and your royal robes?"

"Anyhow," the prince continued, "they didn't. I asked them what was the idea of arresting a poor farmer in the middle of the night, and they replied that it was this middle-of-the-night part of it that made my actions suspicious. Where was I going, and what was I doing? I cooked up some sort of a yarn about being out of a job and out of tickets, and they appeared to believe me. However, they said that the orders of Queen Formis were to make a census of all male Cupians, for the purpose of either impressing them into service or killing them, as soon as the army of King Yuri should come along on its triumphal march northward.

"Of course, I did not want to be listed and quartered on any of these villages, where my identity would probably be recognized, so with mock eagerness I asserted my loyalty to my brother—naturally not referring to him as such—and inquired as to whether there were any openings for mechanics in the air service, thanking my luck the while, that we Cupians do not have registration numbers painted on our backs like the Formians.

"As a result of my apparent eagerness to serve in the army, which seemed perfectly plausible in view of my being out of a job, only a few perfunctory questions were asked as to my identity, and I was taken along to an encampment of the ants. I had picked the air service, because that would undoubtedly be manned almost entirely by Formians, who would not be so likely to recognize me as would my own countrymen, unless I happened to run across some of my former instructors at the University of Mooni. I had to take a chance on that.

"To make a long story short, the motley army of the yellow and black allies came along a few days later bound northward, and I was assigned to one of the kerkools which carried repair parts and machine tools for the airplanes. We then proceeded north without event until the entire army went into action south of Lake Luno. And, just in time for this battle, there arrived a large force of fliers gathered from all over the two kingdoms for the final drive that was to end the war.

"According to word brought back to the air base where I was stationed, the army of my baby cousin had only one plane and one antiaircraft gun, but these accounted for quite a number of ant fliers, and soon we were busily at work making repairs."

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"Just a moment," Myles Cabot interrupted. "Didn't it give you a guilty feeling to be repairing the airships that were to fly against your own people?"

"Not at all," Prince Toron replied with a smile, "for most of my efforts were directed toward filing stay-wires almost to the breaking point, drilling small holes in fuel tanks and plugging them with loose wooden pegs, adding grit to the lubricating oil, and performing other similar acts of sabotage. I really believe that I brought down fully as many Formian planes as did the opposing army.

"But in spite of my loyal efforts and those of the brave Cupians fighting under Hah and Tedn and Poblath, the black hordes were too numerous and too well equipped, and so finally triumphed. Word came back to us that the Kew forces had been driven beyond Lake Luno, and that Luno Castle was under seige. Airplanes no longer returned for repairs, and most of our mechanics—ants they were—drifted forward to get a view of the fighting, leaving me all alone.

"NOW was my chance to act. Near by stood one ship which had been brought in for some minor adjustments, and on which I had secretly grounded the ignition, thus putting the machine out of commission. It was a simple matter to open the short-circuit, and soon I was humming up into the air.

"Straight up I rose until I could get a pterodactyl's eye view of the lake and the surrounding hills. Several stads to the north was the slowly retreating line of Hah Babbuh and Buh Tedn, followed by an opposing line of the forces of Yuri, while other ant troops surmounted the heights overlooking the little lake. Over the contending armies flew the navies of Formis, dropping bombs, but their marksmanship was not proving very destructive, for they were flying high to avoid the eddies which rose from the gorges of the mountainous country to the northward.

"Even as I gazed, a party of fliers detached themselves from the advance and returned toward Luno Castle, so I settled slowly down to join them. Of course, they suspected nothing, until I got within a few parastads of them and started dropping bombs. Two planes fell, and you should have seen the rest scatter!

"But just as I was exulting over my momentary victory, my attention was attracted to the island of the Castle. Fighting was in progress on the heights and on the beaches. Cupians were leaping from the cliffs into the water and swimming toward the northern shore of the lake. Many Formians were rowing across from the mainland to the southern shore of the island, where they disembarked and got into the fray, and very soon after that every one of my countrymen had been driven into the water.

"They all seemed to be good swimmers, but on the northern mainland cliffs awaited an eager throng of armed ant-men. Without a moment's hesitation I turned the nose of my plane straight down and dropped almost to the level of the lake; then, quickly righting her, I skimmed along the cliffs and cleared them of the black enemy with a few well-placed bombs, just in time for the brave survivors of the castle to land and make their way through the hostile cordon."

"Yes," Poblath confirmed, "if it hadn't been for Toron, we never should have succeeded in rejoining the army. We got through the next lines in a storm which followed soon after."

The young prince continued his story: "But this maneuver placed me below the enemy fliers whom I had just dispersed. Back they came and swooped down on me as I rose to meet them. My plan was to fly straight up through them, for the reason that a target coming head on at a slight angle is the hardest to hit from an airship. But they got me with a bomb before I could make it; and my plane fluttered down into the water like a falling leaf, completely out of control.

"It took me some paraparths to disentangle myself from the floating wreckage; and by the time that I had done so, the

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storm, of which Poblath speaks, had broken. It was not much of a storm as Porovian storms go, but in the semi-darkness and rough waves I managed to swim undetected to the island, where I concealed myself in one of the shore caves until nightfall, when I ascended to the castle.

"There I found matters much as I imagine you found them, Myles, a day or two later, except that the darling baby king, whom I had never seen alive, was lying dead, kicked unceremoniously into a corner, with the jeweled dagger of my brother stuck through its tiny chest. So I prepared the funeral bier as you found it, and left that note to let you know that Cupia still had a king. That is all."

"But how did you get through the enemy lines to join our army?" asked Cabot.

"That would take too long to tell," replied Toron, "for we are anxious to hear your adventures. I had a most difficult time hiding in the hills and escaping from one danger only to fall into another. But luck was with me and I finally got through after several sangths of wandering. Now tell us *your* story."

So Cabot told of how he had been left for dead at the blockade on the outskirts of Kuana the evening of the assassination, how he had journeyed north with insufficient arms and no headset, how he had been captured and then had escaped in the relay station, how he had fallen into the trap of the ant-bear, how he had seized the kerkool and reached Lake Luno, how he had been burned out of the woods and washed away by the lost river, how he had fought the beasts of the dark in the Caves of Kar until the blue ape had rescued him, how the priests had nursed him back to health, and finally how he had made his way through the forces of Yuri to safety and freedom.

When the comparing of notes had ceased, the newcomer outlined what he had learned of the plans of the army of Yuri.

"Would that we could gain control of the air!" sighed Prince Toron, "but, alas, we have not one single plane. Every day the enemy scouts fly over us, mapping our positions. In fact, the only thing which holds them at all in check is the large number of whistling bees which infest this region, and an occasional shot from our two anti-aircraft guns."

By this time the pink twilight had fallen over the face of the planet; and Cabot, tired but somewhat relieved, withdrew to the quarters prepared for him, and tumbled into the rough cot which he found there.

The next thing he knew, it was morning. He was awakened by an orderly arriving at his tent, to inform him that the commanding general desired his presence for a trip of inspection along the front. So with some difficulty he shaved, made himself presentable, and reported at headquarters, where Hah was awaiting him with a few of his more immediate personal staff. A rough soldiers' meal of green milk and alta was served, and then the party started on their reconnaissance.

During the meal, and as they walked along, Hah sketched to his old friend and associate the events which had occurred since Myles and Buh Tedn with their loyal troops had left the mangool at Kuana on the evening of the assassination, to begin their long march northward. Hah had been instructed to hold the jail at all costs, as a rallying place for whatever loyalists might remain at the capital. Throughout the rest of that afternoon and all through the following night, the forces in the mangool gradually augmented. By morning the jail was jammed with supporters of the baby king. They even overflowed into all the surrounding blocks.

BUT with the daylight came the inevitable, namely a few effective bombs from Formian fliers, which forced Hah Babbuh and his men out into the open. Just as he and his immediate advisers were wondering what course to take, a messenger arrived from Kamel Barsarkar of Ktuth, stating that he was in control of the city and pledging his allegiance to little Kew. Instantly Hah decided to take the road which runs southeastward from Kuana until it skirts the old pale which used to mark

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the boundary between Cupia and Formia. This road then curves northward again until it reaches the city of Ktuth.

So thither Hah set out, and met with practically no resistance, as Yuri and his ants were all engaged to the northward and were naturally expecting that Hah would head for Lake Luno. But the ant-men soon discovered the plans of the loyal Cupians, and therefore attacked Ktuth in force shortly after the newcomers reached there.

In Cupia there are but two principal roads running from the cities which border the old pale to the northern part of the Okarze Mountains, at the foothills of which lies Lake Luno. One of these roads starts at Kuana, and is the one over which Poblath and his jail kerkools, Buh Tedn and his foot troops, Prince Toron, the army of Yuri, and lastly Myles Cabot himself, made their way. This is the direct road. The other runs north from Ktuth and enters the Okarze range at a point northeast of Luno. And it was over this second road that Kamel and Har retreated.

It was well that they did, for they gathered additional supporters from every town through which they passed, and they kept the enemy from making a hurried advance along this road, and thus perhaps reaching the mountains, and possibly even Luno Castle, ahead of the main Cupian army.

As it was, Hah and Kamel held the road, beat a masterly retreat and joined the main army as it was entrenching itself just after the battle of Lake Luno.

So much for Hah's account, which I have greatly boiled down, as its details would have but little bearing on the main events which I am endeavoring to cover.

Now that Myles had heard this latest narrative, he was able to piece together a very complete history of the war to date, compiled from the events in Kuana before all the parties separated at the mangool, and from his own adventures, and the stories told by the priests of Kar, by Prince Toron, and by Hah Babbuh.

During the reconnaissance which now was in progress, Cabot's attention was chiefly devoted to recalling to memory and checking up these various accounts.

Save for the cheers of the loyal troops, the trip along the front was uneventful until there was heard in the southern skies the familiar purr of a nearing motor. An enemy plane on scout duty. Instantly Hah and Myles and their party got under cover.

On came the plane; but presently another sound was borne to the antennae of the watchers, namely a shrill whistling from the woods on their right.

"Now we'll see some fun," Hah softly radiated, "for here comes a whistling bee to do battle with the plane controlled by the ant-men."

And sure enough, even as he spoke, a huge orange and black insect winged its way into the silver sky. The fight took place almost directly overhead, and was a repetition of the two battles in which Cabot himself had taken part near Saltona, while still a guest of the ant-men at Wautoosa during the early part of his stay on the planet.

Both parties appeared to be adepts in the art of aerial warfare; but, of course, the bee had only his sting and legs with which to defend himself, whereas the plane had its fighting tail, its grapple hooks, and at least one rifle. Given a fair deal, with only side-slips, spirals, loop-the-loops and tailjabs, the bee would have had the advantage; but what chance had he against explosive bullets? And so in due course of time the bee was shot down, and fell screaming to the ground; while the plane, evidently injured to some extent itself, retired again to the southward.

The bee fell quite close to where the observers were stationed; and, impelled by curiosity to see how badly it was damaged —for every whistling bee remaining alive meant just one more obstacle to the air fleet of the enemy—Hah and Cabot and their suits drew near to the disabled creature, keeping their revolvers ready, however, lest it should attack them.

Cabot's radio headset had been working badly that morning, and now apparently it began playing tricks upon him, for as

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he walked along he thought he heard a very faint voice calling. "Cabot, Cabot, O Myles Cabot!"

But as his radio was nondirectional, he could not tell whence seemed to come the voice. He stopped and began to adjust the controls. Clearer and yet more clear sounded the voice until, at the shortest wave length of which his set was capable, entirely outside the range of Cupian conversation, the sound became no longer a vague suggestion, but rather an unmistakable voice, speaking the universal language of Poros:

"Cabot, Cabot, O Myles Cabot!"

CHAPTER XIV

PORTHERIS

"CABOT," the voice continued, "do you not know me? Do you not recognize him whom you rescued from the spider web and who afterward spared your life near Saltona, although you had robbed his honey store? It is I, Portheris, who speak to you. Put down your gun and give me help, or I perish."

There could be no longer any doubt as to the source of that mysterious voice. It was the whistling bee who was speaking! Cabot sheathed his weapon. Switching his controls back to the normal range of Cupian speech, he instructed Hah Babbuh to put up his weapon likewise. Hah, who had heard nothing, was much mystified, but nevertheless obeyed his superior.

Switching to the bee's wave length again, Cabot said: "Portheris, once you spared me. 'A life for a life.' I am yours to command. How badly are you hurt?"

"I cannot exactly tell. But I think and hope that it is nothing more than a broken wing-joint."

At Cupian wave length Cabot then asked: "Is there with our army any one versed in insect ailments?"

"There is," Hah replied, "for my aide, Emsul, studied such under the ant men at Mooni. But surely you do not contemplate helping this bee, for it is well known that the whistling bees, although unwittingly they are assisting us in this war, yet nevertheless do not themselves distinguish between Cupians and Formians as enemies."

"*This* bee is a friend of mine," the earthman asserted, "and will not hurt Emsul, if I tell it not to. Quick, send for Emsul, for if he can save the life of this whistler, I believe that we are about to receive an important accession to our forces."

But Hah was still unconvinced. "How can you 'tell' him? Whistling bees cannot talk."

"I can whistle, though," laconically replied his superior.

So a private was sent on the double quick for Emsul.

The veterinarian, when he arrived a few paraparths later, approached the wounded insect most gingerly; but finally his professional curiosity got the better of him, and he plunged into his work. It was the first time that any physician, either Cupian or Formian, had ever examined a live bee, and accordingly it was a great day for science!

Emsul's inspection convinced him that all that was amiss was a broken wing and shock, and that with care Portheris would entirely recover, so a huge litter was improvised. Then came the question of getting the enormous creature onto this litter. He was too weak to be of very much assistance; but, by dint of great effort, and much prying by means of poles, and some kicking by the bee's own legs, they finally got him on. Then six men grasped each end of each handle, and bore the striped creature in triumph to headquarters, where he excited the wonder of the entire staff, and not a little fear.

To appreciate the situation fully, we must use an earthly analogy. Imagine a party of British officers hunting in the jungles of India in the company of a near-human creature from another planet—say Mars, for instance—and coming upon a wounded man-eating tiger. Imagine the man from the skies talking in apparent silence with the tiger, and then informing the astonished hunters that the tiger is a friend of his, and must be brought into

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camp and treated for his wounds. How could they know that the ferocious beast would not turn and devour them, when cured, or even during the process? Only a supreme confidence in the man from the other planet would induce them to go through with the program.

But the Cupians had just such a trust in Myles Cabot, and so they dared to risk befriending the bee. Emsul set the wing-joint in a splint, and several green cows were driven in for the bee's delectation. After that he slept.

WHEN Portheris had rested, Cabot called in Toron, Hah Babbuh, Poblath and Buh Tedn, and—alternately tuning to the two ranges of speech—broached to them his plan.

"Portheris," he asked the bee, "how is it that you know our language although your range is so different from ours?"

"That question has oft been discussed among us," Portheris replied, "and we have always regarded the other inhabitants of Poros as either stupid or rude. Do you remember shouting to me after the fight at Saltona, 'Don't! Was it for this that I saved you from the spider?' I heard you, and stayed my sting. Yet, when I answered you, you gave no heed. It has always been thus. Cupians and Formians alike have never replied when spoken to by Hymernians, or 'bees' as you call us. Why is it, I ask you in turn?"

"Stop this whistling," interjected Poblath, "and tell us what it is all about."

Cabot, being tuned to another wave length, did not hear him. The bee, however, heard and informed Cabot, who obligingly shifted his controls and explained.

"As I figure it out," he said, "these bees can send and receive on either of two different wave lengths. One of these is about the same as that of Cupian speech, and on this the bees merely whistle, so that whistling is the only sound which you ever hear them utter. On the other wave length they talk, but as this is outside the range of your antennae, you never hear it. But they can hear you talk, when they are tuned to receive the whistles of their own breed. And I can both hear them and send to them, by tuning my artificial speech-organs to their higher wave length."

"It sounds plausible," Toron assented judicially.

The others were astounded.

Then tuning back to the shorter wave length, the earth-man continued his conversation with the bee.

"If you Hymernians have the intelligence to understand and to talk our language, how is it that you have no more sense than to attack the ant men, whose rifles render them invincible against you?"

"I know not," Portheris replied, "save that we cannot resist a fight. I suppose it is for the same reason that smaller insects seek a light, only to be destroyed."

"Then if you *must* fight," Cabot suggested, "why do you not fight in swarms, and thus overwhelm your adversaries by sheer weight of numbers?"

"It never occurred to any of us," the bee answered, simply. "We are an independent race. We fight for the love of fighting, rather than any desire for victory."

"Would you consider a project whereby you could achieve more effective battles?" Myles asked.

"Probably."

"What do you think, then, of this plan? I will equip each Hymernian with a fighting man armed with a rifle, to ride upon his back. If you will assemble your brethren together, I will train them in the tactics of aerial battle formation. Of course, all your fighting will have to be done right-side-up, lest you dislodge your riders. No side-slips, no spirals, no loop-the-loops. But this disadvantage will be offset by the weight of overwhelming numbers. By the way, speaking of numbers, how many Hymernians could you muster?"

The bee made a mental calculation.

"About three thousand."

"Fine!" the earth-man ejaculated. "The Formians at present cannot have more than a thousand ships. Thus, with the training which we can give you, and with the equipment which we can supply to you, you

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can go forth and conquer your hereditary enemies, the ant men. And when you have returned victorious, you shall live at peace with the Cupians, who will breed for you special herds of the choicest green-cows to satisfy your need for food. What do you say, O Hymernian?"

"It is a wonderful plan!" Portheris murmured devoutly. "May the Great Architect speed the mending of my wing."

The plan and its approval were then conveyed to the assembled Cupians, who went wild with enthusiasm at the prospect of once more regaining control of the air.

"It spells sure victory," Hah Babbuh soberly declared.

"Yes," Poblath the philosopher assented, "The Great Architect builds to peculiar plans, but the resulting edifice is perfect."

"Let's go," said Toron, who was beginning to pick up earth slang from Cabot.

And so, a few sangths later, when Portheris had entirely recovered, he flew away, to return in several days with a vast concourse of his winged brethren.

It was indeed an imposing spectacle. Three thousand orange-and-black bees, each the size of a horse, winging their way through the air in such swarms that they obscured the silver skies and darkened the ground beneath. And the noise! Cabot alone could hear the combined hum of twelve thousand wings, but the Cupians were nearly deafened by the whistling.

Finally all the bees settled down and found resting places on the surrounding rocks. Portheris reported that all had agreed to follow him in this new undertaking, and their battle lust was hard to restrain.

There, in the presence of a large part of the Cupian army and of his own followers, Portheris the First was crowned King of the Bees, and he and Toron concluded the treaty of alliance between Cupia and the bee-people. Cupia at last had an air navy!

But Cupia by no means yet had control of the air. First it would be necessary to discipline and train that wild and lawless winged horde. And some task it was! Cabot had to take personal charge of the instruction, for although others could talk *to* the Hymernians, he was the only person on all Poros who could hear and understand their replies.

And it was with great difficulty that he kept back the half-trained bees from spoiling the whole show by picking a fight with every Formian airplane which appeared.

At last, however, the animate air fleet were completely subjugated and trained. All that the Cupian leaders awaited was the auspicious moment at which to strike.

CHAPTER XV

FOR CONTROL OF THE AIR

TORON, King of Cupia; Portheris, King of the Bees; and Myles Cabot, the earthman; conferred together on the situation.

Said Toron: "The latest advices from Kuana are that Yuri has convinced the Princess Lilla of your death, O Cabot, and that she has consented to wed him, in order that her poor country may again be at peace."

"Is that exactly loyal to you, the rightful king?" asked Portheris, but Cabot refused to put the question, for fear of hurting Toron's feeling. So he explained to the bee that Lilla's high patriotism transcended any mere personal loyalty.

"How do you come by this information?" he then asked Toron. "And how do you know it to be authentic? For, if true, it demands immediate action. Otherwise I am loath to strike until the time is right. Most of the wireless relay-stations have been destroyed. Is some supporter of ours at the capital possessed of a sufficiently powerful set to send from Kuana to here? And, if so, how do you prevent the interception of messages?"

Toron's reply astounded him: "Yuri's forces naturally expect radio from the army of Myles Cabot, the radio man; and so I have dropped wireless for the present and have turned to optics. I have been eager to tell you about this for some time, but have not yet had the opportunity.

"My apparatus consists of a telescope on a tripod. At the focus of the telescope

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is a small electric-light bulb. Thus, when two of these telescopes are focused on each other, at a distance say of eleven or twelve stads, the flashing of one bulb can be distinctly seen in the other telescope, and cannot possibly be intercepted except on a path less than a third of a parastad—about twelve feet—wide, even if the enemy should learn of the existence of our device, which there is no evidence that they have done. But, to make assurance doubly sure, both instruments are masked with screens which admit only the black light about which you taught me. Do you remember?

"We have spies in Kuana," he went on, "equipped with these instruments, and we have relay stations at intervals all the way from here to there. We use the dot-dash code, of course."

"Toron," exclaimed Myles Cabot, "you are a genius! Your invention has probably saved the day. Send word to Kuana that Myles Cabot has returned to life and is about to march to do battle against his foes. I guess that that will not give too much information as to our plans. 'March' is good, for they will never suspect that it means 'fly.' Eh, Portheris?"

The bee wiggled his antennae in appreciation.

Hah Babbuh, Buh Tedn and Poblath were then called in, and the plans were laid for the attack.

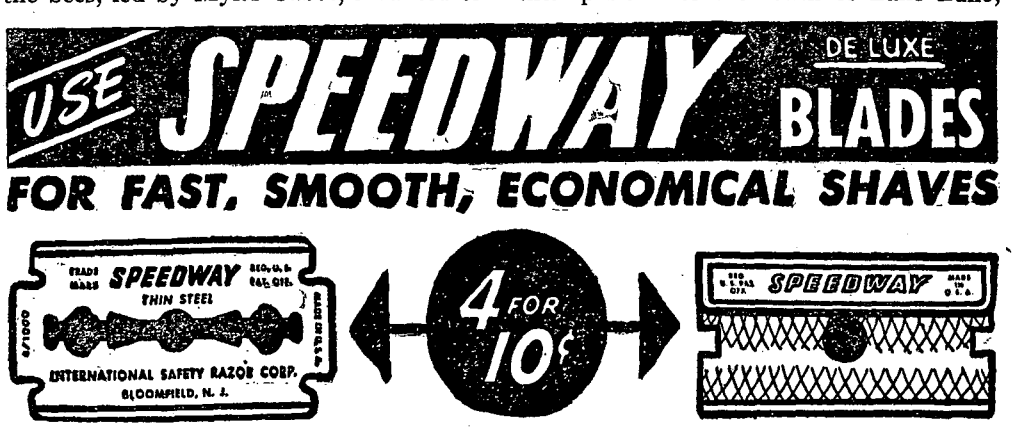
The next morning, as the invisible sun rose over Poros, there rose also the serried ranks of the orange and black air navy of the bees, led by Myles Cabot, mounted on the back of Portheris, the striped King of the Hymernians. Each bee carried a Cupian sharpshooter, armed with a rifle and a basket of bombs. The whole formation flew over the hills and ravines which housed the gathering armies of Cupia, then out across the broad valley which divided the two contending forces.

The Formians, and the few renegade Cupians who fought with them under the banners of Yuri, were prepared for an attack, by reason of Cabot's message which had been flashed to the capital, but they were totally unprepared for such an attack as this. The ant sentinels, eagerly scanning the opposing row of hills for the first appearance of the foot troops of Cabot, were picked off by fire from the air almost before they could give warning. Then the animated planes swept on and began bombing the hastily assembling Formians.

Close in the wake of the bees, came the foot troops of Cupia, surging across the plain and easily mopping up the demoralized Formians.

Soon, however, appeared the battle planes of the ants; but they were surprised and bewildered at the new aerial tactics of their enemies. They had fought against bees before; but never before against bees manned with sharpshooters. And so, although the advance of the striped fleet was stayed and many bees were shot down, an equal number of planes fell victims of the encounter.

By night the Cupians had consolidated their position to the south of Lake Luno,



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and Cabot had established his headquarters in the ruins of Luno Castle.

That evening, at a conference with his generals, it was decided that it would not do for the advance to continue too precipitately. In the first place, the air force ought not to be permitted to get too far ahead of the infantry. And in the second place, the casualties among the bees had been altogether too high. Planes could be rebuilt by the Formians, but bees could not be bred to order for Cupia. This was something which Cabot had not figured on.

So, now that the first shock attack was over, the advance progressed more slowly in the days that followed, strategy taking the place of brute force. Captured airplanes were repaired and manned by ex-flyers of the old Cupian air navy, and were used whenever possible in place of the bees, but still the mortality of these winged allies continued, until it became evident that, unless something were speedily done, the ant-men would soon regain control of the air. But what was to be done?

One day an aviator from a distant point on the front landed at headquarters with a message. As he stood talking to Myles Cabot, he suddenly remarked: "Why, I left my engine running. How careless of me!"

And he looked intently at his plane for a moment, whereat the motor ceased its purring.

"How did that happen?" Cabot exclaimed. "Does your engine stop whenever you want it to?"

"I merely spoke to it, and it obeyed me," answered the Cupian, simply, yet with suppressed pride. "There are several of us in the air service who have learned that trick."

"What do you mean? How can mere words stop an alcohol motor?"

"Oh, it isn't *words* that do it," the airman explained, "but rather a sort of radiation akin to speech. The right kind of an emanation from our antennae will effectively interfere with the ignition at a distance of as much as one parastad."

"And can the same principle be invoked against a kerkool?"

"Of course not," laughed the aviator, "for kerkools employ trophil engines, which ignite by compression, rather than by electricity."

"So they do," said Cabot. "That is what we call a 'diesel' engine on Minos."

And then there was born in the mind of the radio man, the germ of a great idea. He hurriedly sent for Toron, ablest electrician of the whole planet, and for Oya Buh, who had been professor of electricity at the University of Kuana before the civil war.

FIRST, he had the flyer demonstrate to them his ability to stop his machine by rays from his antennae. Then he outlined his plan as follows: "If the weak emanations from the speech organs of a Cupian can stop ignition at a distance of twelve paces, cannot we build a directional radio apparatus which will bring down enemy planes at a distance of a stad or more?"

"That ought to be possible," Oya gravely assented, "but the apparatus would probably be too heavy to mount on a plane. Or on a bee," he added, laughing.

"Mount it on a kerkool, then," Cabot replied. "It would be infinitely more effective than an antiaircraft gun, and the planes which we shoot down by this means will be unharmed for our own immediate use."

"But what is to prevent Yuri from learning of our contrivance and employing it against our planes?" interjected Toron. "For there be great electricians among the Formians."

"That is where the second part of my plan comes in," Cabot replied, with a twinkle in his eye. "We will equip all *our* planes with *trophil* engines. Let us send for Mitchfix, the trophil expert."

And so it came to pass that the energies of all the mechanics of the Cupian army were turned to two tasks; namely, the trophilizing of the airplanes, and the construction of several kerkool-mounted radio machines for the propagation of the mysterious and fatal ray which was to stop the engines of the enemy. Meanwhile, of course,

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the advance stopped. The infantry dug in, and the activities of the bees were limited to the irreducible minimum necessary to keep off hostile scouting planes. Delay was irksome; but now Cabot, assured of eventual air control, could afford to wait.

One day, as he was scouting along the front on the back of Portheris, the whistling bee, they were suddenly boxed by three enemy planes which appeared unexpectedly from three different quarters. Such carelessness! Why had he, on whom so much depended, ventured so far from his own lines without an adequate escort? Well, there was nothing left to do now, but fight, so he unslung his rifle and entered into the fray.

Cabot was no mean shot. An animate airplane, to which he had merely to speak and which could converse with him in turn, was a decided advantage. But, even so, he was no match for three of the best flyers of the ant navy.

Nevertheless he brought down one enemy plane before the other two forced him to descend. His bee fell with him into a narrow gorge with precipitous sides. Although the bee was severely wounded, Cabot made the landing without mishap.

He had noticed during the fight that his enemies had apparently directed their shots at his mount rather than at him; and now, instead of dropping bombs, which would have been very effective in the confined space in which he found himself, they hovered down and attacked him on foot.

He still had his rifle, his bandolier of cartridges, and several hand grenades. The large boulders, with which the floor of the valley was strewn, afforded ample cover. The ant men were advancing with only their rifles, but also were taking advantage of the cover. Sniping between both sides continued without results.

Finally one of the ants held up two crossed sticks—the Porovain flag of truce—and Cabot stepped out into the open for a conference. Then, with a cry of glad surprise, he recognized the Formian. It was none other than the ant who had captured him on his first day on this planet, rescued him from the carnivorous plant, had acted as his defense counsel in his trial before Queen Formis, and had been his and Lilla's friend in Kuana.

"Doggo!" he exclaimed, "what are you doing here? I haven't seen you, or heard of you, since Peace Day, 358."

"Fighting for my own country, of course," Doggo laconically replied. "But to get down to business: 'A life for a life.' In your accursed 'War of Liberation,' you very kindly gave orders that I was to be spared. I now spare your life, for that and for old time's sake. But I must ask you to surrender unconditionally."

"What then?"

"I shall then take you to Kuana as a prisoner," answered the ant. "I cannot promise that there your life will be spared, but I will use every bit of my influence, which is apt to be great, as I am now the winko of the entire air navy of Formia. You know me well enough to depend upon my word."

"Yes, Doggo, old friend, I do," said Cabot. He thought intently for a moment, then tuned his radio set to a shorter wave length and hastily addressed the bee: "Are you so badly hurt that you cannot reach headquarters?"

"I think not," was the reply.

"Then tell Hah Babbuh that I go to Kuana a prisoner—to rescue the Princess Lilla."

"But how can I tell him?" asked the bee, "seeing as you, alone of all the Cupians, can hear our speech, although all of us Hymernians can hear all of you."

That indeed presented a complication which had never before occurred to the radio man. The ability of the bees to receive on the wave length of the Cupians had been all that had been necessary for tactical purposes, and any communications *from* the bees had always been transmitted through Cabot. But at last he had an inspiration, which he explained as follows:

"I do not know how much you Hymernians understand about radio. Have you ever observed Cupians in battle formation?"

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"Many times," replied the bee.

"Then undoubtedly you have noticed the little boxes which our officers wear strapped upon their heads between their antennae."

The bee assented.

Cabot continued: "These are selective sending and receiving sets. Each one contains a wave trap, which silences the radiations of ordinary speech. You bees speak at a different wave length from the Cupians. Well, these boxes contain a wave length adjuster, which, by much the same principle, enables the officers to send to each other at different wave lengths, above the din of battle-cries."

"I get the general idea."

"Go then to Toron," Myles directed. "Speak to him, and point with your paw to his selective set. Perhaps that will suggest to him to tune the instrument to your wave length, and perhaps your wave length is within the range of that instrument. At all events, it is our only chance."

At this point, noticing that Doggo was frantically agitating his antennae, the radio man tuned back to Doggo's wave length just in time to hear him say: "Come, my friend, reply to my offer. Will you, or will you not, surrender?"

"I surrender," replied Cabot, "but on one condition, namely, that you spare the life of my faithful bee."

"Granted," said Doggo. "From henceforth you are my prisoner."

CHAPTER XVI

THE BEASTS OF KUANA

AND so Portheris, the whistling bee, returned to headquarters with his message.

And so Cabot, the earth-man, returned southward in a few parths to the city from which he had wearily journeyed but a short while ago. He had departed a fugitive; he returned a prisoner.

On the trip back in the ant airplane, he and Doggo conversed freely, out of antennae shot of the pilot.

"I bear you no malice, my old friend," said the ant man, "for I blame Prince Yuri for the unhappy condition of my country, more than I blame you. Had it not been for his treachery, our two nations would still be living at peace, as they were when you first set foot on this planet. Were it not for his recent machinations, what is left of Formia would still be living unmolested within the restricted borders to which the 'War of Liberation' reduced us. In such a position, we could win our way back by our mental superiority, our greater industry and our culture; instead of risking, in the scales of war, what little we have left.

"Prince Yuri cares not to reestablish Formia. He is merely using us as means to his own ends, and will turn against us when it suits his private purpose. You and I may yet live to fight side by side against the usurper. But, for the present, he is the official ally of Formia, and I am fighting for my country."

"As is just and right," Cabot added. "But, tell me how will Yuri and Formia relish your bringing me back alive, instead of dead?"

"I have thought of that," his captor answered. "Of course, there is danger that the populace may rally to your rescue. But I do not intend that the populace shall get a sight of you. If Yuri wishes you dead, he doubtless will enjoy killing you with his own hands. But I rather believe that he would prefer to have you alive for bargaining purposes. Do you not think that your princess would trade even her beautiful body in exchange for your safety?"

"No, I do not!" the earthman stoutly declared. "You do not realize her intense loyalty to her country. For little Kew, she might have done so, as he was not only her baby, but also her king. But for me, never. Yuri misplayed, indeed, when he killed little Kew, for I am sure that Yuri would rather have Lilla even than the throne."

"Then why does he not swap the throne for Lilla?" asked Doggo devilishly.

"Just what do you mean?" asked Cabot.

Doggo explained: "You have cited the intense loyalty of the princess royal. Also

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you have expressed an opinion that Yuri would prefer Lilla to the throne. Then would it not be natural for him to offer to abdicate in favor of your candidate, Toron, in return for Lilla's marrying him upon your sudden decease, which could be conveniently arranged? Such a settlement would bring permanent peace to this harassed continent, and every one would be happy—except, of course, Lilla and you. But you would be dead in the Elysian fields beyond the boiling seas, and she would be upheld by the consciousness of her noble martyrdom."

"My God!" Myles exclaimed, "she might accept *that*."

"Never fear, I shall not suggest it," the ant man replied, "for I am still your friend to that extent, in spite of the warfare between our two countries."

Cabot heaved a sigh of relief.

"And what of Formis?" he asked.

"Oh," answered Doggo, "she is not the great Formis whom you knew. That Formis is dead. This queen is merely a newly-hatched one, who does pretty much as Yuri suggests."

The conversation then veered into personal reminiscences; the two former friends, now captor and captive, each recounting what had befallen him since their last meeting before the previous war.

As Cabot told of his age-long journey northward to rejoin his army, the ant remarked dryly, "Poblath will have to invent a proverb to the effect that 'You cannot kill a Minorian.' "

Cabot laughed and said, "He has already done so."

The tension was relieved for the first time since his capture.

Finally they reached Kuana, and hovered down onto the landing stage on the palace, the very palace where he and Lilla had lived together so happily as guests of the king, her father. That palace was now occupied by the usurper Yuri and the black hag Formis; and Lilla was here held a prisoner by the murderer of her father and of her babe.

Cabot was manacled, and then was led into the presence of the king and queen: Yuri, the man with the heart of a beast; and Formis, the ant with the brains of a man. Together they stood beneath a scarlet canopy, which set off to perfection the shiny black naked body of the ant queen, and the black toga which her ally was wearing in honor of their alliance.

"Well, this is indeed a pleasure!" King Yuri exclaimed, rubbing his hands, as Myles Cabot entered the throne-room. "Welcome to Kuana, your cursed spot of sunshine. Formis, permit me to present to you the arch-enemy of your people."

The black queen inclined her head slightly, but said nothing. Cabot, too, maintained a dignified silence. But his eyes showed the intense hatred and scorn which he felt for the betrayer of his country and murderer of his son.

Yuri continued, "To-night you shall be my guest. To-morrow I shall decide how best you can be made to serve the welfare of my beloved people. By the way, would you like to see your wife?"

Cabot was caught off his guard.

"Yes!" he responded eagerly.

Yuri smiled.

"I think it can be arranged," he said. "Ho, sentinel, bring in the princess."

One of the ant soldiers withdrew, and presently returned with Princess Lilla, who entered the audience chamber inquiringly.

In spite of his studied composure, Myles started forward. Here was his beloved wife, from whom he had been absent scarcely a moment since their marriage, until the cruel civil war had separated them. How he longed to rush to her side, and hold her in his love-starved arms and whisper comforting words into her antennae! But, with a great effort, he restrained himself. Yuri must not be permitted to see his emotion. So the earthman stood still, as his loyal wife swept into the room.

She was no longer the little girl whom Myles Cabot had married. Bearing a child, and the subsequent sorrows and horrors which had crowded upon her, had made her a woman since he had left her on the fatal morning many sangths ago, to fly to the

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Peace Day exercises which had turned out so fatally. A beautiful woman she was. Her sorrows had not marred her fair face, and she still outshone all the other women of her race, or of any race for that matter. Cabot noted with a pang that she was dressed, not in royal blue as became one who was in mourning, but rather in black, presumably by order of Yuri, in honor of the visiting queen from ant-land.

HER eyes sought those of the king, then followed his glance until they rested on her husband. For a moment she stood aghast, then rushed across the room and flung her arms around his neck.

"Myles! Myles!" she cried. "Is it really you? They told me you were dead. Then came the news that you had rejoined your troops and were leading them again to victory. The people believed and were glad, but Yuri told me that it was all a lie, concocted to win the throne away from him, and that your body lay burned to a crisp in the woods north of Lake Luno. Yet still I would not marry him, even for the sake of my country, while there yet was a chance that you lived. But what brings you here? And why are you handcuffed?"

"Doggo brings me here," Cabot replied with a wan smile, "and I am handcuffed lest I wring the neck of the reigning monarch."

"Which doubtless would give you great pleasure," Yuri interposed,

"Very great pleasure, your majesty," Cabot admitted with mock deference.

Yuri turned to Lilla with a devilish grin and spoke, "At last I have decided what steps to take for the welfare of my beloved country. The assembly will pass a law annulling your marriage on the ground that your husband is nothing but a lower animal. Then you shall have your choice of marriage to me as the price of Cabot's life, or of life with me as my slave and Cabot's death. Two sangths shall you have in which to decide. Meanwhile the woofuses shall guard your husband in the arena. I have spoken."

Said Cabot, "Choose my death, O princess; for the armies of Cupia will avenge it, and Toron will become king."

"Not Toron!" Lilla exclaimed. Then caught herself, and to King Yuri she replied: "I have chosen, king. You may kill Myles Cabot, if you can, but I will never disgrace Cupia by marrying a beast. There may be some doubt about *Cabot* being a *Cupian*, but there is no doubt that *you* are a *beast*. 'As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.' Now I have spoken."

"Which reminds me," said Yuri, not in the least perturbed, "that I must kill Poblath too, and add his lovely wife, Bthuh, to my retinue. Ho, hum, 'tis a weary job being a king. There are so many details to look after. Take them away; I am tired." And he turned and engaged in some inaudible conversation with the black queen.

Lilla flung her arms once more around the neck of her shackled husband. Then both were seized by the ant-soldiers, and were led out through different exits. During the interview, Doggo had withdrawn, doubtless because he felt that it might be difficult for him to restrain himself, when he saw the indignities to which he had subjected his old friend.

Myles wondered if King Yuri would deprive him of his electrical antennae, for that had always been Yuri's move in the past. But no, for he was dragged away with his set still intact.

Then the guard wrapped Myles completely up in a blanket, and bundled him into a kerkool.

"A good sign," thought Myles. "It indicates that Yuri fears to show me to the populace. Well, here I am in Kuana, and a lot of good it does me! Anyhow, I have seen my Lilla, and she is well. Also, I know how matters stand at court. The new ant-queen is a colorless creature."

And he smiled to himself at the pun. Somehow, he felt the same calm detachment which he had experienced during his trial for treason before the former Queen Formis. He could not help remembering that, after all, this was only a nest of ants!

But he lost some of his calm when he

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found what was in store for him. The kerkool stopped in front of the Kuana stadium, and he was led into the arena. There his shackles were removed and he was given food and drink. Then five woofuses were led forth. Each woofus wore a leather collar buckled about its neck. To this collar was fastened a pole held by two ant-men, and a chain held by another, by means of which devices the clawing scratching purple creature was kept under control.

Cabot was now placed in the center of a circle formed by five equally spaced posts, each post being about two woofus-chain-lengths from the next. To each of these posts was fastened the chain of one woofus; and then the ant men withdrew, leaving Cabot to his own devices.

The woofus is the most dreaded carnivore of all Poros. It is about the size and general appearance of an earthly mountain-lion, except that it is hairless, is lavender in color, has webbed feet, and has pale blue antennae instead of ears. A woofus is a match for ten Cupians in fair fight; and its chief occupation, when not fighting, is just to sit and howl.

Most of the fauna of the planet are either reptiles or insects. Birds are unknown. Mathlabs, fireworms, blue apes and Cupians are about the only mammals. The insects run through all the sizes from tiny bugs up to the ant men and the huge whistling bees. The reptiles range from the brink, which is a tiny kangaroo-like toad a quarter-inch in length, up to the woofus, which I have just described.

A pleasant situation for Cabot, indeed, to have five of these howling beasts staked about him in a circle.

Now he understood why he had been permitted to retain his apparatus. It was so that he might be tormented by the howling of these guards.

CHAPTER XVII

"THE LION AND THE MOUSE"

THERE is an ancient Cupian fable about a brink which once did a favor for a woofus, thus so surprising the woofus that he died of the shock. But in the present case, the brinks figured a little bit differently, as you shall see as you read on.

To realize Cabot's predicament, take a pair of compasses and draw five equally spaced circles, each tangent to the next.

The center of each circle will then represent a post, and the circle will represent the area in which the woofus, tied to that post can bite. The small star-shaped figure, bounded by the five circles, will represent the space in which Myles Cabot was to live during the next twenty-four days, while King Yuri was getting Cabot's marriage annulled by the Assembly, and was trying to persuade Lilla to reconsider her choice.

What irony of fate! The ground which Cabot now occupied was the identical spot where, a little over two years ago, he had directed the firing of the first shot for Cupian freedom. Here had been erected by him the stadium to commemorate his victory over the Formians. And here he now languished in his own stadium, a prisoner of those same accursed Formians, whom he had thought he had driven from Cupia forever. What irony of fate!

The first night of his peculiar incarceration was uneventfully spent. Cabot switched off his headset, so as to shut out the screaming of the purple beasts, and slept the sleep of the just. The joke was on the king, if that august personage had thought to annoy his victim with the noise of the woofuses.

The next morning was unusually hot. Myles awoke, stretched himself, sat up and watched his purple jailers. The largest of them appeared to be ill. Its eyes were running, and its head was covered with swarms of brinks, those tiny hopping lizards which infest the concrete roads and other flat open spaces of Poros.

Instantly Cabot's interest turned to pity. This poor creature was, of course, a dreaded carnivore, a man-eater, and all that; but it was in dire trouble. Switching on his headset, he started talking to the woofus in a soothing crooning tone.

The huge beast pricked up its antennae, then whined and rubbed its paw across its

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face, to wipe off some of the crawling brinks. The other purple saurians eyed Cabot hungrily and ferociously.

Cabot's bowl of water from the night before was still standing at his side. Tearing off one corner of his toga, he dipped it in the bowl, and shook a few drops onto the head of the sick woofus. The poor beast stiffened with surprise, then settled down again and whined a bit more contentedly.

Creeping cautiously forward, Cabot wiped some of the brinks away with the cool, wet rag. The whining ceased, and the woofus flattened itself out with a sigh. It made no attempt to strike at its benefactor; and Cabot, emboldened, drew the bowl nearer and tenderly cleaned every filthy brink from the creature's face.

As the washing was concluded, the woofus opened its eyes and stared steadily at the man, yet still made no move to attack him; and Cabot with a sudden inspiration, began to scratch the edge of the woofus' jaw. The beast stretched its claws with pleasure and submitted to the caress.

Thus the prisoner seemed to have made a friend where one would be least expected. Yet, when the man moved as if to pass by his keeper, the latter growled menacingly and started to rise; whereat Cabot beat a hasty retreat to the center of his prison.

After a while the huge woofus settled down again. Then it whined softly. Once more Cabot bathed its sore eyes. They were friends again.

All this time Cabot kept a careful watch for his Formian jailers, and finally one of them arrived with breakfast, which was shoved in to him at the end of a long pole. Plain fare, but satisfying, alta and green milk.

Cabot asked for wash water, rags, and a clean toga. The wash water and rags were forthcoming, but the toga was refused. Then the Formian withdrew, and Cabot resumed the care of his patient.

Off and on throughout the day he bathed the poor creature's eyes and massaged its tired muscles.

Toward evening Yuri appeared, carrying a long whip, with which he proceeded to flick the five purple guardians into a state of frenzy.

"Stand up, or I'll flick you, too," he called out to the captive. "Haven't you sufficient manners to stand in the presence of your king?"

"Yes," Myles answered, "but, according to your own statement, I am only a mere animal, by which token you are not *my* king, unless you lay claim to being king of the beasts."

In reply, Yuri gave a few vicious swipes at Cabot's pet woofus, which strained at its chain with rage. The earthman went white.

"Are you doing that to frighten me, or just for the fun of it?" he asked tensely.

"Not that it is any of your business," answered the king, "but, as a matter of fact, I am doing it merely because it gives me intense pleasure to demonstrate my power over these five fierce creatures, any one of which is a match for ten Cupians."

"Then stop it at once," Cabot thundered, rising to his feet, "or, by all that is holy, I'll risk my life to untie their chains."

Yuri saw that Myles meant it, and so desisted, but could not resist a parting shot: "So you did stand up for your king after all! I thought I could get you to."

And he strode away, laughing.

When Yuri had made his exit from the arena, Cabot walked over to his woofus, which, with foaming mouth and staring eyes, was still straining at its leash. Myles patted him on the back. It was the supreme test. The woofus ceased his straining and rubbed against the man's side. So they were still friends, and here was a friendship which would last.

Night came, and no guards entered the dimly lighted stadium. Cabot's huge pet slept with its head contentedly in his lap like a St. Bernard dog. As the earthman stroked the sleek purple hide, he suddenly had an idea, and immediately put it into execution. He unstrapped and removed the collar from the neck of the beast.

"You are free, my friend," said he, "and if you take your freedom, it will leave me free too."

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At his words, the woofus stirred, stood erect, shook itself, and then bounded off silently into the darkness. And the captive, now a captive no longer, followed through the gap which the woofus had left vacant. In a few strides, he reached the parapet which divided the tiers of seats from the sands, and was just about to leap up and grasp its edge, when a swift rushing form collided with him and sent him sprawling. Then great webbed paws were planted on his chest, and he saw the horrid face of a woofus leering down at him out of the half-darkness.

Nearer and nearer came the dripping jaws to his face, until—finally—the creature lapped his cheek. It was his own woofus, come back for him.

And thereupon Cabot abruptly changed his plans.

All through that warm tropical night, Cabot, the earthman, and this huge purple saurian of the planet Venus, ranged the Kuana stadium together, alone and in silence.

Myles started teaching the beast to heel, to lie down, and to attack, at his command. And, as the first touch of pink diffused the eastern sky, the two returned to the charmed circle together, the collar was snapped again in its proper place, and Cabot switched off his headset and lay down in the center for a sleep.

NIGHT after night this performance was repeated, until the woofus was as letter-perfect as any dog ever trained. Then Myles started to teach the woofus to hate the other four, above which it towered now that it had regained its health. In fact he had never seen a larger or a more perfect specimen.

Meanwhile Cabot's hair and beard grew long and unkempt, and his toga became indescribably filthy. And every day came Yuri to gloat over him. But never again did he bring his whip, and the purple beasts, although they glared at him with the eyes of rage, did nothing further to evidence their intense hatred of him.

One day Yuri brought Lilla. Her compassion at her husband's appearance was pitiful, but what could she do?

"My poor, poor dear, how are you?" she cried.

"Fine," Myles replied. "Never felt better in my life. Please don't worry about me, dear. I know I look horribly, but I feel perfectly fit, and with a few more days of rest and wholesome food, I shall be able to wring the necks of at least four out of these five woofuses."

"Good!" Yuri exclaimed, clapping his hands. "Then we shall have capital fun, for I plan to have you fight all five of them in the arena day after to-morrow, for the delectation of our sport-loving people. The two sangths will then be up, and the princess has not relented."

"But please, Yuri, do me one little favor," begged Lilla. "Please let Myles shave, and give him a clean toga for the occasion."

Cabot smiled. How feminine of her! If her husband had to be a corpse, she at least wished him to be a presentable one.

But Yuri was obdurate. "I am sorry not to be able to do as you wish, but I can think of no better way to impress upon my deluded people the fact that this Minorian is after all merely a lower animal than to let them see him in his present filthy condition."

"Grant me this one favor," again urged Lilla, "and I will try to be a docile slave."

"You had better be," Yuri sneered, "favor or no favor. Else will I throw you to the Royal Husbands of Queen Formis when I have done with you. I have spoken."

Lilla winced. Cabot noted it, and stiffened.

"Sic 'em," said he, under his breath.

There came a flash of purple and the clink of a taut chain, then a thud, as the largest woofus dropped to the ground with its neck nearly broken. Yuri and Lilla staggered backward affrighted.

"I am content," Myles said to himself. And that night he drilled his pet as never before.

The next day was uneventful. Yuri did not appear, but along toward evening, For-

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mian guards came with poles, and led the five purple beasts away to cells under the stadium. The earthman was similarly confined.

It was filthy, and hot, and circus-smelling in his cell, and accordingly he spent a bad night; but when morning came, he felt unusually well, buoyed up by the excitement of the occasion. Shortly after breakfast, he heard the crowds tramping over his head, as they began to fill the stadium.

He knew that his army undoubtedly had word of the "games" by means of the black-light signal-telescopes of Toron, and he knew that they would make every effort to reach the city in time to rescue him. But he was not counting on their aid. He hoped, in fact, to have the tables effectually turned on Yuri, long before their arrival.

Thus he mused, until finally he was led out onto the sands. The seats were nearly filled. All the standing-space was crowded with black Formians. The royal box was occupied by Lilla, Yuri and Queen Formis, surrounded by a bodyguard of ants.

Cabot walked over the edge of the arena nearest the box and waved to Lilla. At this a sporadic cheer arose, which the king suppressed with an angry gesture. But there remained a tenseness in the air as though there were many others present who would like to cheer, but dared not.

Yuri was plainly annoyed, for it was evident that his victim, wretched and bearded though he was, had quite a following in the audience.

Cabot waved again to Lilla.

"Be of good cheer, my princess," he called up to her. "My enemies have had me nearer to death than this before. But 'they cannot kill a Minorian.'"

His supreme confidence reassured Lilla somewhat, and for a moment even Yuri's brow darkened with uncertainty. But then the king smiled quizzically, as one who knows a very amusing secret.

At last the stands were full. Yuri arose, and spoke into the self-same broadcaster which the present victim, before his downfall, had rigged up for the use of the venerable King Kew.

"People of Cupia," he declaimed, "behold Cabot the Minorian, the beast from another world. Long has he deceived you by disguising himself as a Cupian being; but now he stands before you in his true nature: hairy-faced, long-locked, filthy and bestial. It is he who brought war upon this peaceful planet. For that crime he is to die, to be torn to pieces by other creatures no lower than he. And, with his well-deserved death, peace and tranquillity will return upon Poros. Let his punishment be a lesson to those misguided Cupians to whom he taught the art of war. I have spoken."

A tense silence met the king's words. He paused a moment, expectantly awaiting the cheer that never came, then frowned and raised his hand as a signal. The iron gates at one end of the arena were pulled aside, and out trotted one woofus, then another, and another, and another.

Cabot strained his eyes for the appearance of the fifth woofus, *his* woofus, but it was nowhere to be seen. The iron gates swung shut; and the four beasts, each a match for ten Cupians, trotted out to do him battle.

Upon entering the arena, each woofus blinked its eyes for a few paraparths until it became accustomed to the glare; then stretched itself, and began to sniff and stare around and agitate its antennae.

Finally one of them noticed their prospective victim and called to the others. They pricked up their antennae, and gazed in Myles' direction. Then all four started a stealthy catlike crawl toward him.

Where was his own trained woofus?

CHAPTER XVIII

SANGRE Y ARENAS

THUS collapsed Cabot's plan. Thus went for naught his many nights of instruction!

He had counted on his trained woofus, the largest of the five, to hold off the other four, and perhaps cause a diversion during which he could reach the side of his princess. Had some one guessed his plans, and kept the woofus from him?

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The four purple beasts, which had been admitted to the arena for the purpose of making an end of the earthman, now slowly and stealthily approached their victim, who watched them with fascinated eyes, in more or less of a daze.

"O Minorian, beast from another world," Yuri shouted in glee from the stands, "give antennae unto me! What think you now? Can you *alone* vanquish these four?"

The meaning of his emphasis was most evident, and showed that the king knew that Cabot had counted on the assistance of his trained woofus.

"Not alone, O King," he replied with a meaning all his own, then raised his eyes reverently to Heaven. An angry rustle arose from the stands, like leaves before an approaching storm. Evidently Cabot still had a following in Kuana.

At the head of the Cupian fleet rode Myles Cabot on the back of Portheris, king of the bees, to engage in the great last battle of the war

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There he stood alone, a stranger from another world, bearded, long-haired, disheveled, and unkempt. A pitiable sight indeed! And yet there was something heroic in his bearing, so that a large section of the populace, remembering his past deeds, were still glad to acclaim him as their leader.

But what good would this following do, for the purple beasts were now nearly upon him in their slow and stealthy approach.

At this moment a crash resounded throughout the stadium, but it was heard by the ears of the earth-man alone. The iron gates gave way, and out bounded a fifth woofus, larger than any of the rest. The woofus shrieked, and Lilla and Yuri both shuddered, but each for a different cause: Lilla because she thought that it was a new menace to her husband; Yuri because it represented the one eventuality which he had felt sure he had guarded against. Cabot thrilled.

"Not alone," he repeated, but with a new meaning now. "Look well, O King!"

Like a purple streak of lightning, the newcomer shot across the arena with a long-drawn crescendo howl!

The sound of a woofus is indescribable. Myles Cabot has tried many times to describe it to me, but has failed. The nearest that he can come to it is to say that it resembles the noise obtained by placing the receiver of a telephone-set over the mouthpiece, when one wishes to get even with the girl at Central for being particularly and unusually ornery. It was to prevent this that French phones were invented.

But, to go on with the story. As the fifth woofus charged across the sands, the other four heard his battle-cry, and, pausing in their approach toward Cabot, turned and faced the newcomer, who at once stopped in his onrush.

For a few paraparths, the five beasts, four on one side and one on the other, confronted each other with bristling antennae.

Then "Sic 'em!" shouted the earth-man.

At that, his pet woofus, electrified, sprang at the other four. A clawing, snarling ball of purple hate resulted, out of which finally catapulted one huge woofus, which fled across the silver sands. The four quickly disentangled themselves and followed. Cabot stood aghast, for his woofus, his own brave woofus, was in flight.

Round and round the arena it ran, pursued by the other four. This was a spectacle the like of which had never been vouchsafed to the sport-loving Cupians, or to the bloodthirsty Formians for that matter. It appealed alike to the predominating trait of each race, and the throngs in the stands went wild with enthusiasm, even the supporters of Cabot forgetting their partisanship in their glee.

The fight could now have but one outcome, namely, the ultimate overtaking and overcoming of the pursued; and, after that, a horrible death for the earth-man. Gradually the chase lengthened out, until each pursuer was separated from the next by almost as many parastads as lay between their leader and the beast which fled before them. Cabot sat down in the center of the sands and watched the race with a feeling of strange detachment, scarcely conscious of the fact that, at the end of all this, he was destined to be torn to bits. His only sentiment was sorrow that his pet should have proved a craven, and anxiety for its safety. Why couldn't the woofus die fighting, as befitted a creature trained by Myles Cabot, the Minorian?

With this thought in mind, Myles jumped to his feet, and, hastening over to one side of the stadium, stood directly in the path of the oncoming beasts. He heard Lilla gasp in the stands above, and then the woofuses were upon him. His own pet, tired and frantic as it was, saw and recognized its master, and paused to turn one side and so avoid running him down; and, at this instant, Cabot shouted peremptorily: "Sic 'em, Tige! Sic, 'em!".

Habit proved stronger than fear. The woofus wheeled, and in an instant had laid its surprised pursuer in the dust.

"Run!" ordered the earth-man, and again the largest woofus fled, followed now by only three enemies.

The line strung out as before, and again

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circled the stadium. And again the earthman halted the procession when it reached him. But this time the second pursuing woofus put up a better fight than its predecessor, with the result that the other two caught up, and joined in the fray.

Cabot's woofus was soon lying on the ground, with its three enemies on top of it, but its jaws were firmly fixed in the throat of one of them, and the body of this one protected it in a measure from the other two.

The earthman stood by, an interested but an impotent onlooker, for there was nothing he could do to help. But at last the underdog wriggled clear of the pile and fled again around the enclosure. This time it was followed by only two, for the second of its enemies lay stretched upon the gory sands.

ONE of the two pursuers now rapidly gained upon the pursued and overtook it as it reached the opposite side of the stadium from that on which Cabot was standing, so Myles raced across to observe the battle close at hand.

But before he reached the other side the fight was over. His own woofus raised its bloody head aloft with a paean of triumph and planted its forepaws upon the body of its third victim. The fourth pursuer halted in its mad rush. For a few paraparths the two beasts glared at each other; then, with arched backs and stiffened legs, they slowly circled each other, watching for an opening.

"Divide and conquer," the radio man commented to himself. Then to his pet, "Sic 'em!"

The huge beast sprang at its opponent with a snarl. And now the tables were turned, for it was the other which fled. Round and round the arena they ran, the pursued gradually drawing away from the pursuer.

Myles could see that his own beast was more tired than the other, and, accordingly, he became afraid that even yet the battle might be lost. So hastily deciding upon a rash plan, he placed himself directly in the path of the oncoming beasts. Straight toward him they came, yet Cabot did not flinch. Then, with a bound, his enemy was upon him, and down he crashed, flat on his back on the silver sands.

But his hands warded off the slathering jaws from his throat. His strength was sufficient for this for just a few moments; and a few moments were enough. With a crunch, the jaws of his own woofus closed on the spine of his enemy. And in another instant the bearded, disheveled, gory earthman and his equally gory purple pet arose from the ground and stood erect, victors of the arena. Four dead forms lay on the bloody sands, bearing mute witness to the efficient combination of brute strength and human cunning which had triumphed that day.

Then the woofus stepped over to its master and rubbed against his side.

Lilla shuddered, and hid her eyes, but Cabot smiled, and looking down, patted the bloody head.

At this moment the king arose and gave some hurried orders to his guards. It was his undoing. The woofus heard and recognized the voice, and in another instant it had cleared the railing with one bound and was making its way through the frantic throng toward the royal box.

Cabot called and called, but forgotten were his teachings, for the woofus had wind of his maltreater, and was obsessed with a single thought, namely, revenge.

So Cabot followed hastily in the wake of the beast, and easily surmounted the barrier. The whole stadium was in an uproar. Red, yellow and black flags were being waved by the various factions, and cries of "Long life to Cabot, the Minorian! Down with the usurper! Death to the Formians!" filled the air, mingled with cries of fear from those near the royal box, and shots fired by the royal bodyguard. The red pennant of the Kew dynasty predominated. Evidently the place had been intentionally packed with the followers of the dead baby king.

But Cabot had no time to exult over this *coup,* for his every energy was bent upon

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reaching Lilla in time to save her from the terror which he had loosed upon them.

In spite of Cabot's haste, however, the beast broke through the guards, undeterred by their firing, and reached the royal box before him. Lilla shrieked and cringed to one side, but she had no need to do so, for straight as an arrow flew the huge animal at Yuri, and down went the king with a crash beneath the impact of the beast. Then the Formian bodyguard closed over Yuri, the woofus, Lilla and Queen Formis, in a snarling, fighting, reeking pile.

"To the rescue of the princess!" shouted Myles Cabot, and a full hundred Cupians responded, falling upon the black writhing mass, with swords, pistol-butts, and even chairs.

Cabot stood to one side, directing the attack. As more and more of his faction rallied about him, he formed the latecomers in a cordon, facing outward, so as to keep off any Cupians so rash as to try to assist their king, or any Formians so temerarious as to come to the rescue of their queen.

So intent was the swarming black pile upon getting at the woofus which had Yuri pinned beneath it, that they did not heed the enemy upon their own backs; but those at the bottom of the pile were careful to bridge their bodies, so as to keep the weight off the ant-queen Formis and the Cupian Princess Lilla.

Cabot's Cupians stabbed and hacked and pulled. Occasionally an ant would turn and snap savagely at them. But one by one the black ant men were crushed and torn away, until at last the bottom of the pile was reached. There on the floor of the royal box lay a battered and bloody purple body, beside a gaping hole which clearly indicated the avenue of escape by which had disappeared Yuri and Formis, with Lilla as their prize. The floor of the box had evidently given way under the weight of the conflict, and through the hole, thus formed, the enemy had escaped.

Cabot and his immediate followers stared at this hole for a mere paraparth; then, realizing the situation, they plunged into the dark depths beneath. The drop was nearly half a parastad, but luckily the hole led into one of the cells for confining beasts of the arena, and the floor was covered deep with straw which broke their fall. The first few of the company jumped, and then called to their companions that it was all right; but those above delayed in following, for fear of landing on those below. And, during this moment of indecision, those in the cell suddenly found themselves set upon from all sides, for quite a number of ant men had fallen through with their leaders, and had remained behind to bar the passage.

The fighting was in nearly pitch darkness, but fortunately there was little danger of mistaking friends from foes, for huge ants ten feet long bear but little resemblance to Cupian beings, even in the dark. Nevertheless, the sharp mandibles of the Formians proved effective weapons at close quarters.

Those of the Cupians who had remained on the stands, hearing the shouts of the conflict below, poured into the hole with weapons poised, and struck home whenever they chanced to land upon an enemy.

Finally all was silence, but whether the Formians had all been slain or had merely retired to some nook from which to rush out again and renew the conflict, could not be told. There was no time, however, to stop and find out.

"Quick!" the earthman shouted, "we must follow the usurper!"

Whereat all the party started groping about to try and discover an exit.

A shout of "Here is the door!" from one of them, and all pressed in his direction, Cabot merely following with the crowd, since his antennae gave him no clew as to the source of the cry. The door opened into a passageway. In silence the party threaded the dim corridors beneath the stadium, until a sudden turn brought them out into the daylight, facing the city. And, as they debouched, they saw, just out of reach, a kerkool which bore Yuri, Formis and Lilla toward Kuana.

Out of the other exits were pouring a fighting, seething crowd of Cupians and

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Formians, as on that other day not so long ago, when Prince Yuri had assassinated King Kew at the Peace Day exercises, and had thus made himself King. But this time the red pennants of Kew outnumbered the yellow of Yuri and the black of Formis combined.

Other kerkools were standing beside the stadium. Without awaiting the outcome of the fighting, Cabot and those with him seized the nearest cars and sped after the fleeing king.

STRAIGHT for the palace drove Yuri, and straight for the palace drove his pursuers. Yuri arrived there first, entered the capitol grounds and barred the gates, whereat the Kew faction surrounded the entire group of buildings on the top of Kuana hill. They were quickly augmented by the victorious reds from the stadium. Then Cabot and a handful of the more intrepid of his faction battered down one of the palace gates and forced their way inside.

As the door crashed in, the assaulting force was met by a volley of shots, but it had been a bit premature and so most of the bullets went wild. Within the doorway stood rank upon rank of the palace guard, Cupians of unquestioned loyalty to the usurper Yuri, his own personal bodyguard, who had been recruited from the unspeakables of the city by Trisp, the bar-mango of Kuana. They were armed with rifles.

But before they could recover from their surprise sufficiently to fire a second round, the assaulting party swept in and engaged them in hand to hand combat. Some of the guard possessed revolvers as well as the longer weapon, and so were able to defend themselves manfully at close range, but they were merely thugs who fought for the love of fighting, whereas the attackers were inspired by the enthusiasm of an ideal, the ideal of Cupian freedom which had been engendered by Cabot, the Minorian, in the first War of Liberation, and which now had been born anew in the second. Their onrush proved irresistible, and soon the few remaining survivors of Yuri's guard had fled into the interior of the palace.

Myles and his men stripped the dead of their arms and ammunition, and followed. The grip of an automatic in Cabot's hand gave him new courage.

"Forward for Princess Lilla!" he cried.

And his followers echoed, "For Princess Lilla! Death to the Formians!"

Thus shouting, they threaded their way through the palace corridors, hunting, ever hunting. Many a black ant man they slew, and many a familiar spot they traversed, but not a sign did they find of Lilla or of her abductors.

The royal palace of Kuana is set upon the crest of Capitol Hill, in the midst of the group of monumental white buildings which comprise the far-famed University of Cupia. Its main elevation looks to the southward across the plaza to the fields and stadium and hills beyond. Surrounding the university group and the palace and the plaza, are the lesser buildings of Kuana, built in stucco in graceful lines, with high-pitched, red-tiled roofs, a style of architecture quite unlike that employed by the ant men, whose houses are square and chunky affairs, resembling exaggerated piles of toy building blocks.

Because the palace stands upon the summit of a hill, the ground entrances lead into what are practically its cellars; hence the interminable labyrinthine corridors which the earth-man and his supporters now threaded. Every turn, every door, every side hallway had to be approached with utmost caution, to avoid a surprise attack; and at each intersecting or forking corridor, the party divided, so as to defend their flanks.

Thus the numbers with Cabot rapidly dwindled, and soon he found himself searching through the passageways alone. Now he had to proceed with even greater caution. No Cupians did he meet, but time and again, after rounding some turn or mounting some stair, he found himself face to face with a Formian. Usually he was quicker on the draw, for the human hand has a craft unequalled by the claw

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of an insect, even though the insect may possess a superior brain. Only one Formian whom he encountered fired first, and fortunately that one missed.

Thus, step by step, the earth man emerged from the subterranean depths of the palace cellars to the upper levels.

He had just annihilated one more black antagonist, when he saw approaching him a Cupian in a toga which bore the insignia of the palace guards. Here indeed was a victim greatly to his taste, for he had tired of killing ants, and longed to get his hands on some one closer to King Yuri.

But just as he was about to fire, the other spoke, "Stop, Cabot! Do you not know Nan-nan of the Caves of Kar?"

Cabot lowered his weapon in surprise.

"What are you doing here? And in that garb!" he exclaimed. "I scarcely recognize you without your red-embroidered robe."

The young priest smiled. "Great are the ramifications of the lost religion. For instance, I might tell you who it was that loosed your pet woofus in the arena this morning when you appealed unto the God of Minos. But, for the present, my duty is merely to lead you to the princess. Follow me."

And back he led Myles Cabot, down again into the depths from which the earth man had so laboriously fought his way. Finally they halted and the priest said:

"There are reasons why I cannot accompany you farther. But you can find the route from here to the princess without difficulty. First right, then left, then straight ahead. And may the Great Builder go with you! I cannot, for I have other work to do."

And he passed Cabot and vanished down the long corridor.

TAKING a firm grip on his revolver, Myles strode around the first turn to the right, then around the first turn to the left, and then pressed on until he found the way blocked by a thick heavy curtain. This he flung to one side, and stepped boldly into the room beyond.

The room beyond was circular, about one parastad in diameter. Its roof was vaulted and lit by a single large vapor lamp. A continuous stretch of crimson curtains lined the walls. At the opposite side of the room from that at which he had entered there was a small raised platform. And on this platform stood King Yuri, with Lilla held close in his arms. He was making ardent love to her, which she seemed too tired and beaten to resist. Yuri's torn toga, and the deep scratches on one of his arms showed only too clearly the handiwork of the purple beast on the stands of the stadium. Or had Lilla done this?

"Stop!" Cabot thundered, covering the king with his revolver.

Yuri turned and faced his accuser, but still kept one arm around the princess, who stared at Cabot almost unseeing out of dull and weary eyes. The king appeared a bit surprised, but nevertheless maintained the calm which was so typical of him.

"Yuri, your end has come," the earthman announced, "and with your death there begins a slaughter which shall not cease until every black Formian is driven from the face of this planet. For only so can war be banished forever."

"Is that so?" sneered the king. "And may I ask who it was that first brought war here from Minos?"

Cabot winced. The accusation was true.

"That is neither here nor there," he asserted. "Maybe I did bring war; but, if so, what I have commenced I shall finish."

Yuri's lip curled in scorn. "Behold, I am unarmed. Is it the custom on your planet to shoot down unarmed men? I had thought better, even of a beast from Minos."

"If you thought so, then you made the mistake of your life," Cabot replied. "I am no story-book character. Often have I read, in tales of chivalrous adventure, how the hero, having the villain finally at bay, gave him his chance, and then vanquished him in fair fight. If I had only myself to think of, O king, I would fling this gun aside, and strangle you with my bare hands. But what of the princess and of Cupia? I have no right to sacrifice Lilla's

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happiness and the safety of my country on the altar of my own personal honor. That would be selfish indeed!"

"Wisely spoken," the princess interjected.

"And so," Myles continued, "armed or unarmed, you die!"

And he raised his pistol.

"Just a moment," Yuri put in hurriedly, seeming for the first time a bit perturbed. "After you entered this chamber, a door automatically slid shut behind you, thus barring your exit. If you do not believe me, you can back up, still keeping me covered, and feel of it. That door is so thick and so secure that you could never break through it. I, and I alone, know the secret of that door. I am not afraid to die, though it is a bit unpleasant to be killed by a coward; but, unless you spare my life, neither you nor the princess will ever leave this room."

"'Better a wise coward than a brave fool'," Myles quoted from one of Poblath's proverbs.

"That may be," the king testily resumed, "but, as I have said, if you kill me, you will never leave this room. Your only hope of escape is to spare my life."

Cabot considered for a moment. Naturally he did not believe Yuri, yet how simple to test him by trying the door.

Just as he was about to do this, however, he remembered something.

"Your threat holds no terror for me," he asserted. "Nan-nan directed me here. If I do not reappear, he will bring hordes of my followers to batter down your door."

Yuri laughed a sneering laugh. "You lose! Did not this Nan-nan, of whom you speak, wear the uniform of my bodyguard?"

Cabot grudgingly admitted it.

"I thought so," the usurper resumed in triumph. "Know then that I sent Nan-nan to lure you here, so that you might become my victim."

The earthman's suspicions were aroused. Whom could he trust? Then he reflected that Yuri was unarmed, which fact seemed to knock the bottom out from under his story. An unarmed person would scarcely have given orders to have an armed person sent to him as a prospective victim.

Why not try the door, however? That would determine in a measure whether Yuri lied. But as Myles started to put this plan into effect, he was stayed by the sound of a human voice, a strange and raucous human voice.

Could he be dreaming? Had his mind given way under the strain of his many vicissitudes? For there were no human voices on Poros.

Yet there could be no mistaking the sound. It was not the radiated antennae speech of Poros. It was a real human voice smiting against his human ears. Cabot stood still in perplexity.

CHAPTER XIX

TREACHERY

"MYLES," said the voice, "show no signs of surprise. It is I, Lilla, speaking to you with my mouth, so that the antennae of Yuri may not hear. Neither can I hear, myself, which makes it difficult for me to talk thus, in spite of all my secret practice. Do not back up, to try the door, for there is a man behind you in the curtains. Remain where you are. When I raise my hand, you must wheel and fire. Then turn quickly back, lest Yuri escape us."

Cabot stood aghast. He scarce took in the purport of the words. Was that raucous sound the voice of his lovely Lilla? Better, then, she stick to antennae speech for the rest of her days!

But there could be no doubt about it, for her lips were moving with the words.

Then up shot her arm. Instantly Cabot realized what she had said. He wheeled just in time to see a Cupian separate the curtains and make a rush at him. This newcomer wore the uniform toga of the palace guards, and held in his upraised left hand a sharp stiletto. How fortunate that it had not been a revolver, for with such a weapon he could have fired at Myles from behind the curtains.

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The face of the onrushing Cupian was a snarl of hatred and triumph, and full into that hideous countenance Cabot fired. The expression changed to one of surprise and thwarted rage. One frantic final effort to reach forward with the dagger, and then the enemy collapsed almost at the feet of his intended victim. Cabot wheeled again to fire at the king.

But Lilla stood alone on the platform. Yuri was no longer there. A faint swaying of the curtains behind the rostrum showed only too clearly the king's avenue of escape. Rushing forward, Cabot flung these curtains to one side and disclosed a long, dimly lighted corridor stretching away. It was empty. Yuri had quite evidently already rounded the turn at its end. So after him dashed the earthman. But a cry from Lilla's antennae stayed his steps.

"Don't leave me alone!" she begged. "I am weak and tired and affrighted. Protect me!"

Once again she was merely a little girl. Her husband returned and comforted her. Then together they searched the walls of the room.

Yuri had lied. Behind the curtains were many exits, and not one was closed. But, then, Yuri might be expected to lie. What mattered it to Myles and Lilla as they clasped each other in their arms? At last they were together and free after their long separation and captivity.

As Myles held close the warm girlish form of his beloved, his tense troubles dropped from him, and a perfect peace descended upon his soul. Lilla pressed limply against him, home at last in the haven of his embrace.

Thus they replighted their love. Thus they stood in the subterranean cellars of the Kuana Palace, oblivious of time and space; Cabot, the earth man, dirty, long-haired, bearded, and dishevéled; and Lilla, Princess of Poros, lovely, dainty, and immaculate. Beauty and the beast, indeed! But they adored each other, with a love unequaled on two planets.

Myles was reunited with his princess, it is true; but there should have been three of them there instead of merely two. All through the fabric of his joy ran a thread of intense grief at the absence of their little son.

"Lilla, dearest," he started to say, "our darling baby—"

He was interrupted by the arrival of Nan-nan, the young priest, who had shed his palace guard uniform and now wore an ordinary Cupian toga.

Said Lilla, hurriedly: "Please, please don't mention it yet!"

Myles thought he understood how she felt about it, and so desisted. Probably her grief was still too poignant to bear discussion. He little guessed that her real reason was that she did not know how much confidence to place in this newcomer.

"Lilla," Cabot said, "this is Nan-nan, one of the priests of the Caves of Kar, who tended me during all my illness."

The priest bowed low before her in acknowledgment of the introduction.

"You forget, dear," Lilla declared, "that you haven't yet told me a single thing of what has happened to you since you left Luno Castle half a year ago to fly to the Peace Day exercises, which turned out so fatally."

"When have I had time?" Myles asked, in reply. "Let's sit right down here and begin."

But Nan-nan cut in with: "Pardon me for interrupting, O princess, and thou, O defender of the faith. But there is much work to be done. It is now night. There is fighting in the streets. You must consolidate the palace, Cabot, and hold it until your army from the north can reach Kuana."

"But what of Yuri?" asked Myles. "We must run him down before he escapes us, or there will be more villainy afoot."

Nan-nan laughed. "You yourself don't seem to be doing very much running just this moment. But compose yourself. In spite of your many followers, who at this moment swarm every corridor of this palace, none of them dared lay hands on the person of the king. Word has just reached me that he has safely left the building, and

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this is why I have sought you out. Your men are now gathering in the Council Hall above."

"Then lead to the Council Hall, Nan-nan, and I follow," the earthman replied.

AS THE three of them entered the great Council Hall of the palace they found it filled with a jostling leaderless throng of Cupians.

Nan-nan mounted the rostrum and held up his hand. The crowd faced him and became silent.

"Patriots of Kuana," he shouted, "I present to you your leader, Myles Cabot, the beast from Minos, protector of Cupia."

Up shot every hand.

"Yahoo!" they radiated, in unison, the cheery Porovian greeting.

"And your rightful ruler, the Princess Lilla."

Again the salute and the shout of greeting.

Cabot then joined the young priest upon the stage. In spite of his condition, there was a look in his cold gray eyes that inspired confidence and respect.

"Men of Cupia," he said "and I can call you by no more noble title—men of Cupia, to the northward lies our army of liberation, equipped with the most modern engines of destruction. We must hold this city until they arrive. And then we must keep on until the last Formian lies dead. There is no room on any one planet for two ruling races. So it must be war to the hilt, asking no quarter, giving none, until the Kew dynasty is restored to the throne, and Cupia is made permanently free. Are you with me?"

"We are," came back the unanimous shout.

"Then every pootah hold up his hand."

Up shot the hands of all those who had commanded the old "hundreds", or athletic clubs, which Cabot had used as military companies, and on which he had based the organization of the first army which Cupia had ever known.

"Good!" said he. "Let the pootahs step over to me."

They did so.

"Now let every bar-pootah hold up his hand."

Up shot the hands of all the lieutenants.

"Let each pootah choose two bar-pootahs."

The choices were quickly made, and thus the earthman had established the skeleton framework of an army.

"Are there any of the higher officers here?"

One colonel and several men of intermediate grade signified their persons. A colonel is one who commanded a "thousand"—that is to say, a body composed of twelve of the hundreds. I perforce use the earth word "colonel," as the Porovian term is utterly unpronounceable. The colonel gave his name as Wotsn.

Cabot divided the non-officers by lot among the various pootahs. In a few moments the disorderly mob was organized. To Colonel Wotsn was intrusted the disposition of the troops and the posting of guards. Then Cabot, Lilla, and Nan-nan proceeded to one of the upper terraces to get a view of the city.

The night was warm, tropical, moist, and scented, as are all nights on Poros. Beneath them on every side were dotted the street lights of the great city. All was so peaceful and serene that it hardly seemed possible they could actually be at this very moment in the midst of a civil war.

Myles inhaled the fragrant hothouse air with long breaths. The princess leaned against him in perfect contentment as he quoted:

"And over all, as soft as thine own cheek,
Brooded the velvet stillness of the night."

From time to time Cabot's earthly ears discerned faint popping noises here and there throughout the capital. It sounded, for all the world, like the night before the Fourth of July in any American city; but Myles realized full and well that it meant that shooting was in progress between the opposing factions. These were not firecrackers—this was war!

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Even so, what could they do about it just then?

So the love-starved earthman held his princess close in his arms and waited.

Finally he had an idea; so he dispatched one of the orderlies, who had followed them to the roof, to instruct the colonel to send out patrols into the streets to gather in more of their supporters. Then ensued another period of waiting, during which Myles Cabot and his princess sat side by side on the parapet of the terrace surveying the city below and saying very little. For, "Perfect communion needs no speech," as Poblath would put it.

AT LAST Lilla broke the silence to remark: "Now would be a very good opportunity to tell me of your adventures."

He was glad of the chance, for by starting at the very beginning with the assassination of the old king in the stadium, he hoped to be able to lead up gradually to the sad death of little Kew. It would be well, for undoubtedly her grief would continue to fester within her heart until she had discussed it and thus given it an outlet.

So Myles recounted the inception of the revolution, and the first part of his age-long journey northward. He had just reached the point where he had abandoned his kerkool and had taken refuge in a house at the end of a blind alley, when Nan-nan interrupted to direct their attention to the northward, where waving phosphorescent streamers of light began to appear on the horizon.

"Northern lights," thought Myles. He had never observed this phenomenon before on Poros.

"Airplanes," the priest laconically remarked. "Your fleet is driving the enemy flyers southward toward Kuana. Those are the searchlights of the contenders."

And he was right, for in a few paraparths the fighting was directly over the city. But what puzzled the observers on the palace top was the fact that many of the contending planes and all of the contending bees appeared to carry no searchlights. No, that wasn't exactly correct—they carried searchlights, but these were unlit. Not an air fighter on the Cupian side was directing a single beam on the enemy; whereas each of the ant flyers carried a light on a long pole, which it could project in any direction so that the light would not reveal the true position of the craft.

Thus the Formians possessed a tremendous advantage. It is true that this equipment was difficult to manipulate and hard to hold focused upon the bees and the Cupian airships; yet how much better it was than no lights at all! The Cupians had lights. Why, then, did they not use them? Was it because, not being on long poles, the Cupian searchlights would serve as targets and thus aid the enemy more than they would aid their owners?

The ants outnumbered the Cupians and their bee allies. Only the ants were equipped with means to illuminate their enemy. Not being illumined themselves, they could hold their planes steady, and did not have to dodge about as did the forces of Toron. Yet, in spite of these advantages, the Cupians were steadily forcing them southward and were shooting down Formian after Formian, with scarcely any casualties of their own. How could they do it?

Cabot was thrilled, but dumfounded.

"Can you make it out?" he asked of Nan-nan.

"Yes," the priest replied, with a smile; "it is very easy."

"Then, for the love of the Great Builder, tell me," the earthman exclaimed. "Don't keep me in suspense."

But all that Nan-nan would say was: "Wait!"

Cabot was about to remonstrate again, when he noticed a peculiar thing: the Cupian flyers seemed to be manipulating their unlit searchlights, just as though they were lighted. What was the great idea? What could it mean?

His thoughts were interrupted by something dropping with a thud on the soft silver sward beside him. He groped for it and picked it up. It was a pair of binoculars, quite evidently lost overboard from one of the battling flyers. Now Cabot

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and his party would be able to observe the fight from closer quarters. Courteously he offered the glasses to the princess, and she in turn to the priest; but the latter declined them with a shug, and again that quizzical smile, which a passing gleam of light revealed for a moment. So Lilla adjusted them and peered up into the velvet sky. Then she uttered a little exclamation of surprise.

"Myles, Myles," she cried, "our ships have at last lit their searchlights! Now, indeed, we shall win."

"We were winning already," he replied, likewise peering into the black abyss above. "But why do you say that our ships are using their lights? It still seems to me as though they were not."

"Here, take the glasses and see for yourself," said Lilla, and she handed them over, adding, as she looked into the sky with her naked eyes: "But now it seems as though the lights of our fliers have been extinguished. How strange!"

Cabot adjusted the lenses to his own vision, and sure enough all the ships, on both sides, were illumined. And still the young priest continued to smile. Cabot passed the binoculars back to Lilla, and again all the Cupian searchlights became dark to him. It was most mystifying. He glanced at his companions in perplexity and suddenly saw the teeth and eyeballs of Nan-nan glow phosphorescent. Then, and not until then, did the truth dawn on Cabot.

"They are using the black light!" he gasped.

"The black light?" Lilla inquired. "What is that? How can light be black?"

"They are using the black light," Myles continued, "just as my country, America, did to protect our convoys in the last great war on my own planet, Minos. Our warships swept the waters far and near with beams of the black light. These beams could not be seen by the German submarines, and thus did not reveal the position of our ships. When a beam played full upon a submarine, the luckless craft even then did not realize that it was observed; did not realize its fate until the high explosive projectile followed close in the wake of the light. Thus the scourge was driven from the seas, and the Germans never even suspected how it was done. I have discussed it with Toron, so this must be his idea.

"Your glowing teeth and eyes revealed the secret to me, O Nan-nan. And that reminds me of a funny story. Major Rob Wood, of the American army, the inventor of the black light, was once demonstrating it in his laboratory to Sir Oliver Lodge shortly after the close of the war. The room appeared to be in darkness, and yet in fact a powerful searchlight was throwing a beam of black light straight across the middle of the room.

"So the major gave his guest a hand mirror, and told him to walk around with it until he could see his own teeth, when he would thus know that he was in the path of the beam. But Sir Oliver skirted the laboratory in vain. His teeth never showed up white at all; for you see, he had a set of false teeth, and only *real* teeth will glow in the black light. Major Wood and I were horribly embarrassed."

"That is all very well," Lilla broke in, laughing, "but if our men have the black light, and the Formians can't see it, how can our men see it either?"

"A fair question," her husband replied, "and the explanation is easy. These binoculars, like those used by the American navy in the World War, are equipped with a fluorescent screen, or light filter, the effect of which is to make the black light appear as though it were the ordinary white light to which our eyes are accustomed. Thus to us the light is white, whereas to our enemies it is—well, for them it does not exist at all."

"So that is why the ant men do not dodge, not knowing that they are illumined by the Cupian searchlights, and thus they fall an easy prey to the rifles of the Cupians."

By this time the tide of battle had swept to the southward. The party on the terrace withdrew for much needed rest and refresh-

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ment. Cabot was elated, but Nan-nan threw a wet blanket over his hopes.

"Do not forget," the young priest reminded him, "that with daylight the Formians will return in full force. What will your black light then avail you?"

They separated for the night, Cabot pondering deeply on the parting words of the priest.

LILLA and Myles made their way to her old quarters, where he had courted her in the days when he had been a mere barsarkar, newly arrived in Kuana, after his escape from the Formians. Here, too, they had lived as guests of King Kew, her father, after their marriage; except, of course, during such time as they had spent at their own country residence on the beautiful little island in the midst of Lake Luno. The fatal Lake Luno!

In Lilla's recent captivity under Yuri, she had been permitted to occupy these same quarters. And Bthuh, her best friend, and wife of Poblath, had accompanied her as lady in waiting, and had taken charge as of old.

Yuri, still hoping to win the princess, had not violated the sanctuary of those rooms.

Lilla and Myles entered the quarters together.

"Lie down for a minute on this couch," she said, "while I find your things."

He obeyed. In a moment she was back, but the weary earthman was sound asleep where he had dropped. Tenderly she kissed the unshaven face; then spread a blanket over him and left him there in the outer room, while she retired to her chamber for the night.

The next thing he knew some one was shaking his shoulder. He awoke with a start.

Bthtuh, the wife of Poblath, lady in waiting to the princess, was standing over him with an electric candle in her hand.

"Myles, Myles," she cried, "I am glad to see you again, but make haste, arise. An orderly is at the door with a message."

Cabot jumped to his feet and went to the door. The Cupian soldier standing there informed him that Colonel Wotsn desired his presence as soon as convenient. Then the man withdrew, and Cabot returned to the room. The three dials of the clock on the wall showed that the time was two hundred and sixty o'clock, not quite daybreak.

"Is Lilla up?" he asked.

"No," Bthuh replied. "She still sleeps."

"Then do not disturb her," he said. "She needs the rest."

So, dismissing Bthuh, he shaved, bathed, and donned a fresh toga. Then, as the princess had not yet appeared, he penciled a hasty note for her, and went to have breakfast with the Colonel. Nan-nan, the priest, was also there.

Wotsn announced that during the night the city had fallen completely into their hands, and that the loyal army from the north was about to enter it at daybreak, but that the Formian air fleet was already on its way northward from Wautoosa to give battle.

He wished Cabot to be on hand to see these developments.

As the first pink light from the invisible sun diffused through the silver clouds of the eastern sky, these three and their attendants charged up on the highest terrace of the palace. There was the hum of many motors in the air. The early morning light disclosed to the southward the long serried ranks of the imperial air navy of the ant empire, while the north came the whistling bees and their Cupian allies. It was a truly impressive sight.

The two forces would meet for battle squarely over the city. The outcome was in the hands of the gods.

And then Cabot saw what filled his heart with intense joy and security. Several kerkools, manned by Cupian soldiers, drove in from the north and halted beside the palace. And each kerkool bore the familiar electrical machinery designed by Cabot and Prince Toron, the machinery which propagated that peculiar ray which was capable of silencing the ignition of any airplane motor—except, of course, the tro-

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phil engines with which the Cupian planes were equipped.

"Let them come!" Cabot exulted. "For, look, there is the means to bring every black flyer to the dust."

But Nan-nan, the priest, shook his head sadly.

"That device has passed its usefulness," he declared, "for every Formian plane now has a trophil engine the same as ours. If your fleet relies on any assistance from these machines they are lost."

"How do you know this?" Cabot asked him.

To which the priest replied, as was his wont: "The holy father knows everything."

"Then we are indeed lost," added Lilla, who had just joined them, "for look—the force from the south outnumbers that from the north, and the Formians are the more experienced flyers, as we well know."

"How does it happen," Myles asked, "that the ant men do outnumber us? When I was captured, *we* were rapidly gaining the ascendancy."

"That is true," Nan-nan replied, "but your troops, in their rocky fastnesses, did not possess the facilities for the construction and repair of airships which Prince Yuri had at Wautoosa and at Mooni and at Kuana.

"So that, in spite of the greater fatalities among his forces, his fleet steadily grew until it outnumbered yours. And when he learned the secret of the ray, his ascendancy became complete. Even before your capture he had complete control of the sky, if he but chose to exercise it. Last night's air battle, which your fleet won by the aid of the black light, was the first to its credit in two sangths. And I am afraid that this morning the tables will be turned."

"Only a miracle can save us!" Lilla exclaimed.

"True, too true! But there will be no miracle," Nan-nan asserted positively.

And Cabot added: "We must trust to the brains and patriotism of Cupia, and to them alone."

CHAPTER XX

THE TABLES TURNED

BUT the men in charge of the kerkools in the street below, the kerkools which bore the machinery for the short-circuiting ray, busied themselves about their outfits as though they did not realize that their rays were impotent against the trophil engines of the enemy.

The vanguard of the Formian fleet arrived over the city. The watchers on the terrace could distinctly see the low-flying-point-plane. But, to get a clearer view, Cabot removed the black light filters from the binoculars which had dropped beside him the night before, and focused the glasses on the oncoming flyer. He noted her black crew. He noted that she carried the black pennant of the ant empire, rather than the yellow pennant of Yuri. And then he uttered an exclamation of surprise.

"She is a bomber," he cried, "and is about to bomb the palace!"

At these words Lila started to rush down into the interior; but Nan-nan put out a restraining hand. "You are safer here," he said, "and what the Great Builder wills let us accept."

Cabot drew his princess close to him and waited.

But the plane never reached the palace. Suddenly and inexplicably it burst into flames and dropped like a meteor into the plaza just to the southward. The plane on its left quickly followed suit, and then that on its right. Other planes along the line met the same fate, and yet the Cupian fleet had not yet come within range. What could be the explanation?

And then into that disorganized and demoralized line of ants, which but a few paraparths ago had been advancing so serenely confident upon Kuana, there charged the united forces of the Cupians and their Hymernian allies. The Formians broke. They retreated southward again. Their retreat became a rout. But how had it been accomplished?

"It is the miracle for which I prayed," Lilla exclaimed.

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"Tell us, O Nan-nan," Cabot demanded, "you of the lost religion, whose holy father knows everything."

But the young priest merely grinned sheepishly.

"Doubtless the holy father does know," he said, "but he omitted to impart his knowledge to me before I left the Caves of Kar."

"Well said!" Cabot remarked. "That is the best crawl I have ever witnessed. As an alibi artist you beat even a certain classmate of mine, who was noted for that at Harvard, and later in his practice of the law."

Nan-nan's grin became even more sheepish.

Cabot continued: "But this should be an occasion for rejoicing rather than for questionable humor on my part. Forgive me, Nan-nan. We have just been present at a great victory. You and Glamp-glamp saved my life in the Caves of Kar, so that I might live to see this day. You yourself saved my princess by directing me to her in the passage beneath the palace, and thus she too is present on this joyous occasion. Cupia is again free. And no little of the credit belongs to the priests of the lost religion."

"The credit all belongs to Myles Cabot," magnanimously replied Nan-nan.

They were interrupted by a boyish figure which rushed up the stairs onto the terrace. It was Prince Toron. His youthful face was suffused with joy. In fact, he seemed more like his former care-free self than he had at any time since the beginning of the war.

"Well, well," he cried. "Greetings, my cousins! This is indeed a happy occasion. Even now the vanguard of our army of liberation is entering the capital. But I came on in advance to superintend my machines."

"And to take over your palace, I suppose," Cabot added dryly and not without malice. Ever since he had found the dead body of the baby Cupian on the royal bier in the deserted castle on the island of Lake Luno, with the note signed "Toron, King of Cupia," Myles had borne ill-will against his wife's cousin. At first he had suspected Toron of the deed. But this suspicion had been allayed by the account of the happenings at Luno Castle which had been told him by the priests of the Caves of Kar. It had awakened, only to be stilled again by Toron's own story and by the assurances given by Poblath. Nevertheless, he still resented Toron's bad taste in signing the note with his royal title—resented even the fact that Toron, that any one else than Lilla's own son, was King of Cupia. This resentment had been only slightly mitigated by the unquestioned loyalty of Toron to Cupia and the common cause.

And so Myles permitted his feelings to get the better of his manners when he greeted Toron on this joyous occasion which should have been free from all malice.

Lilla appeared shocked and surprised at her husband's language, and started to remonstrate; but he, sensing the situation at once, cut in ahead of her with a question.

"By the way, your majesty," he said, "we are all most inquisitive to learn just how you contrived to bring down those enemy planes, and thus save the day when all seemed lost."

"I thought you would want to know," Toron replied, with boyish pride. "So that was one of the reasons why I rushed up here to greet you. You remember the day with our army in the mountains, when that young aviator excited your attention by stopping his airplane motor with a word, and how we perfected a machine which would send a ray which would accomplish the same thing. But perhaps you were not so intimately acquainted with our later experiments with that ray. You remember how we were not able to understand fully just why this ray accomplished what it did. This intrigued me to such an extent that I resolved to discover the secret. And I hit upon the clue just about the time that you were captured."

"Yes, yes," Cabot interrupted, "but I am not asking about the motor-stopping

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ray, which became useless as soon as the enemy copied us by adopting trophil engines. What I am asking is how you destroyed the foremost planes of the enemy advance in this morning's battle?"

TORON smiled indulgently.

"Wait a paraparth," he said. "I am just getting to that. To go back to the motor-stopping ray, which I was telling you about, I discovered that it was not the radio impulse which actually did the work, but rather a sort of sub-wave, or by-product of it, which was more of the nature of a light-wave than anything else. In fact, it was a bit like the black light of which you taught us, and which we used so effectively in our signaling and in our search-lights. This led me to turn my efforts to producing the sub-wave directly, rather than as a by-product of a radio impulse.

"When this had been accomplished I discovered that this new wave worked by converting its path through the air into an electric conductor more perfect even than heavy electric cable. It was this conductive path, falling athwart the wiring of the airplane, that short-circuited the ignition and stopped the motor.

"From this discovery it was but a simple step to use the wave as a power-line. In the battle this morning we would focus two rays on the fuel tank of an enemy plane, send a high potential current up one wave and down the other—and bang goes the tank. Very neat, wasn't it?"

"Toron, you're a genius!" Cabot exclaimed, patting the other warmly on the cheek. "The radio man from the earth yields the palm to the radio man of the planet Poros."

"This is something which the holy father must know at once," Nan-nan interjected.

"In order to maintain his reputation for omniscience," Cabot laughingly added.

This reminded him that he had ignored the presence of the priest and the colonel, ever since the sudden arrival of Toron, so he turned with an apology and introduced them.

"I must beg your majesty's pardon and that of my two distinguished friends here," said he. "Your majesty, permit me to present Colonel Wotsn, impressed into service as chief of staff of the palace forces, and Nan-nan, one of the priests of the lost religion, who ministered unto me in the Caves of Kar. A very human individual, in spite of being a priest."

Toron patted the cheek of each in turn as they bowed low before him.

Again Lilla sought to interrupt: "But my cousin is *not* king."

"What do you mean?" Cabot exclaimed, amazed. "Certainly you hold no brief for his brother, the renegade Yuri."

"Certainly not," the princess remonstrated, "but you forget our little son. It's our little Kew who is King of Cupia."

All the party turned to look at her in horror! Was her mind becoming unhinged by the ordeals which she had gone through? Did she not remember the terrible doings in Luno Castle, when Yuri's dagger had stilled forever the heart of the little babe?

Toron had found the dead body and had withdrawn the dagger and prepared the funeral bier. Cabot had buried the little corpse with his own hands. Nan-nan knew the whole ghastly story in its every detail, from the spies of the lost religion. And even Wotsn shared in the general popular knowledge.

Had Lilla's mind gone blank on this subject? Lilla, from whose own arms the babe had been snatched by its assassin!

Myles flung a protecting arm about her.

"My poor, poor, dear girl," he said comfortingly, "our little darling lies dead and buried in the courtyard of Luno Castle."

Indignantly she broke away from him, and stormed: "I'll *not* be soothed as though I were drunk with saffra-root. I know what I know. And—"

But suddenly Nan-nan exclaimed, "Look! Look at the street below!"

Instantly all were attention. And no wonder, for the street below was filled with the ranks of marching ant men!

"Is it a *coup?*" Cabot shouted. "Are we betrayed? You, whose religion tells you everything, answer me that."

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All stood doubly dumfounded. What signified the marching Formians? And what meant Princess Lilla's words about the infant king?

CHAPTER XXI

BUT WHO IS KING?

MYLES CABOT, Lilla, Toron, Nan-nan and Wotsn watched the marching Formians for a moment in amazement from the palace terrace. Then, "They are unarmed!" Nan-nan exclaimed, with relief.

True. Not a single one of the black ant men carried a weapon. And then there appeared in their wake rank upon rank of armed Cupians, the army of liberation.

"No *coup* at all, thank God," said Cabot, "but merely prisoners of war!"

Lilla, too, sighed with relief.

"And now that that is over," she said, "I *will* be heard on the subject of who is king. Our baby is safe and sound, disguised as a peasant child, in the care of my old nurse in the village of Pronth in the Okarze Mountains."

"But, darling, I buried him myself at Lake Luno," Cabot remonstrated, still unconvinced.

Lilla explained: "That baby, whom Yuri slew, and whom you buried, was merely a borrowed orphan which we substituted for little Kew immediately after his birth, fearing exactly what eventually did happen. I grew to love the little substitute greatly, and his death grieved me almost as much as though he had been really mine. But our own baby still lives, and is King of Cupia!"

A warm thrill flooded through Myles Cabot's body. He was still a father. The little hands would yet clasp his. The little toddler would yet walk by his side. All was well with Cupia, and his loved ones were safe.

Prince Toron stood the blow nobly, though his boyish face went a bit haggard.

"I seem to be out of a job," he remarked grimly. "Today is not our family's lucky day. First my brother loses his throne, and then in rapid succession I lose the same throne. Let us hope, however, that this run of bad luck does not extend to my infant cousin."

And he strode over and patted Lilla warmly on the cheek. It was an act of congratulation and renunciation.

"Toron, you are a true sport," said Cabot, "and some day I hope to repay you for your loyalty."

Gone was every trace of his long resentment toward the young prince.

Lilla continued her explanation: "To make sure of little Kew's identification, in case anything went wrong with me, I took several prints of the six little fingers of his right hand, and inscribed each one with the words: 'The finger-print of the true king.' One copy I sewed into his little toga, one I secreted at Luno Castle, and one I took with me."

"That word 'pbrs'—truth—well illustrates, in the present instance, Poblath's proverb: 'Truth has an unpleasant sound,'" Toron dryly remarked, "for it will certainly have a very unpleasant sound to my brother Yuri when he learns that the true king still lives. There always was some doubt as to the validity of my own claim to the throne, but there can be no question as to the claim of little Kew, so this makes the situation much worse for Yuri."

Just at this moment Hah Babbuh and the other generals of the army of liberation burst in upon the scene.

"We have been looking for you everywhere, your majesty," exclaimed Hah.

"Don't majesty me any more," Toron replied with a sigh and a smile, "for little Kew still lives. All hail the true King of Cupia!"

And every one present held his right hand aloft as a sign of fealty. Then warm were the greetings between Myles Cabot and his former associates.

When these were finished, "The war must go on," Hah asserted. "I have made Poblath the commandant of this city. He is already establishing the police, and arranging for the quartering of our troops. All the prisoners have been placed in the stadium. The enemy have fallen back to

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the line of the old pale, where they are entrenching. Our fliers have passed over them and are now attacking the enemy air base at Wautóosa. What do you propose, excellency?"

"I propose that we dine," Cabot wearily replied. Once more he must take the field as winko of the troops of a nation. And that being so, the question of prime importance was: "When do we eat?"

So the whole party adjourned to the banquet hall of the palace, where a rough fare, somewhat hastily gathered, was served. And there, after the meal, was held a conference of war. There Portheris, the leader of the whistling bees, joined them.

"First," Myles Cabot asserted from the head of the table, "let me lay down the principle that the mistake of the last war must not be repeated. We must ask no quarter, and give none. We must go on until there is not a single Formian left living on the face of all Poros. For there is no room on any given planet for more than one race of intelligent beings. What do you say?"

Hah Babbuh, his chief of staff, answered: "I agree with you. And I believe that the rabble have learned their lesson. But it all depends on Count Kamel. It was he, more than anyone else, who blocked the successful completion of the last war."

"Make him a sarkar, and he'll stand for anything," Prince Toron dryly observed. "You remember how he gave up his agitation for a two-hour day, when you made him minister of public works. And he has been fighting loyally in our ranks ever since this present war started."

A laugh went up from all those present.

"No quarter is all very well," the Princess Lilla interjected from the other end of the table, "but what about the prisoners in the stadium? You can't shoot them down in cold blood, can you?"

"We might invoke the *ley juego,*" replied her husband.

"What is that?"

"That is an old Spanish custom in vogue on my own planet," he explained. "Political prisoners, whose continued existence might prove embarrassing, are let loose, and then are pursued and shot for 'attempting to escape.'"

"A dirty trick!" Toron objected.

"Much like that which Satan, the Formian, played on you in Wautoosa years ago," Lilla added.

Cabot grimaced.

"And," Hah Babbuh added, with a smile at his chief's discomfiture, "the situation is complicated by the fact that your old ant friend, Doggo, is one of the prisoners in the stadium."

Cabot grimaced again.

"I seem to be cornered," he observed.

"And yet," said Nan-nan, the priest, "the death of all these black pests is the price of peace on Poros."

Just then a messenger entered the room and saluted.

"Sire," said he, addressing Hah Babbuh, "the prisoners in the stadium have obtained arms and are holding it against our troops."

"Thank the Great Builder," Nan-nan reverently exclaimed, "for He has solved our problem for us!"

"How did they get the arms?" Cabot asked.

"Airplanes from the south," the messenger answered, "which took advantage of the fact that our fleet is busy attacking Wautoosa."

"We must bomb them out," Toron suggested.

Hah Babbuh gave orders accordingly, and the messenger withdrew.

The conference resumed its session.

MYLES CABOT continued: "As I was saying, there is not room on any given planet for more than one race of intelligent beings."

A boom in the distance, then—

Bang! A crash shook the palace. A veritable shower of bits of stone and mortar spattered among the diners. The entire company sprang to their feet, overturning the chairs in their haste. The scene instantly became one of wild confusion, every one trying to demonstrate his calmness by

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taking command and giving orders to every one else. Another boom in the distance.

Bang! A shell broke within the banquet hall itself. Buh Tedn and two of the attendants writhed upon the floor. Several others sustained minor wounds.

Cabot leaped upon the table.

"Ten-shun!" he snapped out.

Every one halted.

"Poblath," he directed, "take the princess and Bthuh to the cellars! Here, you orderlies, carry the wounded below. Dr. Emsul, accompany them! Hah and the rest of you, to the plaza to take command of your forces! I go to reconnoiter."

Boom! Bang! Another shell burst somewhere else near by in the palace. But order had been brought out of chaos. Cabot, the radio man, vaulted onto the back of Portheris, the whistling bee, adjusted his radio-set to the latter's wave-length, and sailed out into the air through one of the broad windows of the banquet hall. Straight up shot the Hymernian, as his rider scanned the surrounding landscape.

A puff of smoke to the south. Boom! The smoke and the sound came unmistakably from the stadium. Bang! A shell exploded on the upper terraces of the palace behind them.

Cupian fliers now appeared from the southward, headed for the stadium, and soon the thud of bursting bombs mingled with the booming of the stadium gun and the detonations of its projectiles.

Cabot had seen enough. He signaled to his mount and they settled down upon the plaza, where the earthman joined Hah Babbuh and his staff.

"Where is the artillery fire coming from?" the Babbuh anxiously inquired.

"From the besieged Formians in the stadium," his chief replied, "the airships which brought them their rifles, undoubtedly also brought them a field gun."

"Then we must radio to Wautoosa for more bombing planes," said Hah, and dispatched one of his attendants with orders to that effect.

Bang! A shell burst upon the plaza itself.

"They have changed target," Myles remarked. "We were none too early. If Poblath were here, he would undoubtedly say something about 'Out of the frying pan, into the fire.' "

But no more shells fell, and soon one of the fliers returned with the news that a well-placed bomb had put the Formian gun out of commission.

"I hate to wreck our beautiful stadium with any more bombs," said Cabot. "Can't we take the place by assault, or land an attacking force within the arena?"

"I doubt it," Hah replied, "for the ant men have probably taken cover beneath the stands, whence they could repel an attack from either direction."

Just then an orderly arrived with a message. One of the jailers, who had been in charge of the prisoners, had escaped when they overthrew the guard and seized the stadium. He reported that before his own escape Prince Yuri had sneaked into the stadium from wherever he had been in hiding in the city, and had taken command of the insurgent Formians.

"We must capture him alive!" Cabot shouted. "The bombing must stop!"

Here at last was an excuse to save his beloved stadium. Hah gave orders to recall the planes, and soon they could be seen proceeding to their base. A special force was then organized for the assault.

But, as they were assembling, three Formian air ships arose from within the stadium and headed due south at full speed. The meaning was only too evident; with the withdrawal of the Cupian bombers there had been nothing to prevent the renegade prince and the survivors of his black allies from making their escape in the planes which had originally brought them their arms, and which must have been kept under cover during the bombing of the stadium. Hurried orders were given for pursuit; but, as the Cupian fliers returned from their base and disappeared over the southern horizon, the silver sky began to darken in the east and to turn red in the west. Another day was at an end. Prince Yuri was still at large.

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As the evening fell, the assaulting column was launched against the stadium. But they met with no resistance. As Poblath would say, the pterodactyl had flown. The stadium was empty of all save the corpses of the slain and the remains of what once had been a one-hundredth-of-a-parastad field gun, i.e., just about a seventy-five.

So the council of war resumed its sessions in the palace, where the débris had been removed by the attendants. The ladies were safe. One of the wounded had died, but Buh Tedn and the other were reported to be resting comfortably.

The conference proceeded with its plans for the war. When all the military dispositions had been completed, Toron suggested that baby Kew ought to be crowned at once, in order to consolidate the popular support behind the throne.

So early next morning Lilla was dispatched to the north by plane, amply convoyed, to bring back the little monarch. Not without qualms did Cabot let her go, but something had to be risked in times like these, and it hardly seemed possible that one who had been through so many tribulations could be subjected to any further danger.

Then for several days every one marked time, while Kuana was cleared of skulking Formians, and the army was provisioned and equipped. Brief furloughs were given all who wished to visit their families and to reestablish their homes. Kamel, as predicted, was overwhelmed by his sarkarship, and made stirring patriotic addresses throughout the city. The Popular Assembly, which Yuri had dissolved, was reassembled; and, under the leadersip of Kamel and Toron, both parties joined in unanimously voting for war to the hilt.

The Cupian air fleet finally captured Wautoosa, thus giving them an oasis in the midst of the enemy, who still stubbornly continued to hold the line of the old pale.

Then Lilla returned with baby Kew. Such a reunion as there was, when Myles Cabot clasped to his breast his wife and his infant son!

THE little boy, whom Cabot had never seen, was all that the proud father could have hoped. He had not dared to ask whether the little one had inherited any of his own earth-born peculiarities. He had feared that such might be the case and might disincline the Cupians to accept the baby as their king; for, much as the country admired and respected, yea, even loved, Myles Cabot, they still regarded him as not one of them; a hero, even a demigod perhaps, yet still not quite human.

But Cabot's fears proved groundless. Baby Kew was earless, and had antennae, vestigial wings, twelve fingers, and twelve toes.

"I shall have to invent another line for 'This little pig went to market,' Myles remarked, and then explained to Lilla that rite of Anglo Saxon babyhood.

The infant king surveyed his newly-produced father solemnly out of the big blue eyes beneath his long yellow lashes; then shook his curly golden head, and smiled, and holding out one tiny hand, encircled Myles' forefinger with all six fingers.

It was the thrill of a lifetime, never before experienced, and never to be repeated; the first response of one's baby son!

On the day after the arrival, Kew XIII, in his mother's arms, was crowned King of all Poros. He behaved very badly at the ceremony, screaming with rage and dashing to the ground a toy ant man which had been given him to pacify him. But, as this was taken as a good omen by the populace, no harm was done.

Among the guests of honor at the coronation were Portheris the Hymernian king of the bees, Prince Toron, Poblath the mango, Hah Babbuh, Nan-nan, and Glamp-glamp.

Ouva, the holy father, sent his blessing from the Caves of Kar, but declined to attend.

"The prophecy is not yet fulfilled," he declared, "for ant men still live."

In honor of the occasion, Poblath composed a new proverb: "Thrones have no upholstery," which caught the popular fancy.

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Everywhere throughout Kuana fluttered the red pennant of the restored Kew dynasty. Myles Cabot, as regent, delivered the speech from the throne. It was a carefully prepared oration, which quoted from the memorable address of the late Kew XII, and reiterated Cabot's own determined idea that there could be no peace on Poros until the last Formian was exterminated.

Thus Kew the Thirteenth became the king of a whole planet, and took up his residence at the Palace of Kuana.

And once again the armies of Myles Cabot swept southward against their black enemies. But this time there was no quarter.

Of course the ant men contested every step of the way, and thus many sangths dragged on. Once more, as in the previous war, Myles Cabot had given orders that Doggo, the ant man, and Yuri, the renegade prince, should be captured alive if possible. Once more the serial numbers of all Formian dead were tabulated at headquarters. But Doggo's number was not among the slain, and no trace was found of Yuri.

For the most part, Cabot directed the war from the palace at Kuana. He had braved much and suffered much, and once more he had saved Cupia from the accursed Formians, so no one begrudged him his well-earned rest. Buh Tedn, who was convalescing from his wounds, remained as a guest and adviser at the palace. Princess Lilla also was a source of constant help and counsel to her husband.

Slowly the Formians were driven southward, and this time there was no demand from the rank and file of the Cupians that the fighting be given up, for all realized that this present war and its hardships were due to the fact that the previous war had not been fought to a finish. There were now no pacifists in Cupia, for that unfortunate country had reaped to the full the fruits of pacifism. Also the fact that the former leader of the pacifists, Kamel, had been promoted to a full sarkarship may have had something to do with it.

SO THE war progressed without event until word was brought to G. H. Q. that a Formian plane, bearing Prince Yuri himself, had been shot down within the Cupian lines, but that the prince had escaped.

Myles Cabot had experienced once before how Yuri had been able to pass safely among even hostile bodies of his own countrymen, due to their respect for the sacredness of his royal person. Therefore, if Yuri were now within the lines, there was no limit to the trouble which he might cause. Accordingly it behooved Cabot to proceed at once to the front and take personal charge of the man-hunt.

It pleased him much to have an excuse to put an end to his inaction. So he radiod to Hah Babbuh to expect him, and early the next morning set out by kerkool for the front, accompanied by Poblath as aide.

Lilla and Bthuh did not want them to go.

Said Lilla, "I can see disaster ahead. Every time you ever go anywhere, you get into trouble."

"And always get out of it again," the earthman added, "for, as Poblath here says, 'You cannot kill a Minorian.' "

Lilla and Bthuh were a bit reassured as their husbands kissed them an affectionate farewell and departed. The two men were in high spirits at the prospect of fighting.

The day was a perfect one. Silver sky o'erhead, silver woods and fields on each side, and a straight road before them.

Another noon—six hundred o'clock—they reached the air naval base at Wautoosa, and stopped for lunch. It seemed almost like a home-coming to Myles to be once more in the old ant-city where he had been held a captive so long during the early part of his stay on this planet, and where he had first met and loved the Princess Lilla. To Poblath, however, the stop was not so pleasant, for an orderly at once brought him a radiogram from the capitol to the effect that Bthuh had been taken ill.

"I must return at once," he announced.

And Cabot, who realized that that is what he himself would have done in the

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same situation, readily assented. So Poblath requisitioned one of the army planes and hurriedly departed.

But this left Cabot without an escort. The commandant of the air base insisted on detailing a bar-pootah to accompany the regent; but the war was on, Wautoosa was short-handed, and every man was needed; so Myles tactfully declined.

Before continuing on his journey, he unbuckled his various accoutrements; and, for relaxation, revisited some of his old haunts; such as the room where he had been confined when the ants had captured him at the time of his arrival on the planet; the garden where he had first seen the lovely Cupian who had later become his bride; the room where he had so often visited her, after his triumphant return from Mooni with the artificial radio speech-organs which he had constructed; and so on. Every spot was crowded with memories.

But finally he tore himself away, and resumed his journey. It would be late at night before he could reach Saltona, his next stopping place.

As he sped along over the smooth concrete road in his silent two-wheeled vehicle, he reflected on a plan of action for the capture of Yuri, the arch trouble-maker of the continent. Poros could not be sure of peace until not only the ant men were exterminated, but also Yuri along with them.

Cabot had chosen for this trip a kerkool, rather than a plane or a whistling bee, because he wished to stop at every town and army post, in order to keep in touch with the development of the man-hunt.

And so, in the course of the afternoon, he received a message which caused him to turn sharp to the right, and give up his plan of spending the night at Saltona. For Yuri had been reported as seen only a few stads west of the point where Cabot had received the message.

As the earthman sped along in this new direction, the sky began to turn black. Not nightfall, but rather the approach of one of those tropical thunderstorms which are so common on Poros. Darker and darker grew the sky. And then the storm burst.

Myles had to run his machine at a mere crawling speed now, not only to prevent skidding, but also because the rain made it difficult to see where he was going. And as he crept along, a figure loomed ahead, holding up its left hand as a signal for him to stop. Cabot slowed down even more, and approached the figure.

It turned out to be a Cupian in an army toga, wearing the insignia of a low-ranking officer, and with a revolver slung at his side. This officer was holding over his head one of those umbrellas which all inhabitants of Poros carry whenever outdoors, not so much for protection against storms like these, as to ward off the blasting heat of the sun if it should happen to shine for a moment through a rift in the silver clouds. For Poros is very close to the center of the solar system, and only the circumambient cloud-envelop keeps it from being shriveled by the sun's heat.

The umbrella had evidently not protected this particular Cupian very much from the swirling rain, for his toga was dripping wet. Myles brought the car to a full stop and offered the officer a ride; so the latter clambered aboard through the rear door, as Myles sat impatiently at the levers, anxious to be on his way again.

As the other walked forward to a seat just behind the driver, Cabot started up the kerkool.

"Glad to give you a lift," he said. "Pretty wet out, isn't it?"

"Yes," his guest replied. "Very wet."

The voice sounded familiar. Maybe this Cupian was one whom he had met before.

"I am Myles Cabot," the regent announced. "Can you tell me anything about the progress of the hunt for Prince Yuri?"

"Perhaps I can," the other replied, sticking the muzzle of a revolver into Cabot's ribs, "for I am Prince Yuri."

CHAPTER XXII

AT YURI'S MERCY

AS PRINCE YURI thrust the muzzle of his revolver between Cabot's ribs, and at the same time revealed his identity,

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Cabot instinctively slowed down the kerkool.

"None of that!" the prince shouted in his antennae. "Speed her up!"

The earth-man obeyed.

"What is the idea?" he asked calmly. "Now that you have got me, what do you mean to do with me?"

"I intend to use you as my chauffeur," the other answered, "to drive me through your lines in safety to Formia. Once there, we will leave your fate to Queen Formis."

"That is a lie," Myles calmly asserted, "for the Formis, who is now queen, has no individuality when you are around."

"You flatter me," was all that Yuri deigned to reply.

They drove along for some distance without further conversation. The rain stopped. The weather cleared. Finally Cabot broke the silence with, "Seriously speaking, Yuri, I am sorry for you."

"Sorry for *me!*" the prince exclaimed with a laugh. "Well, well, that certainly *is* a good one! Here I go and get you into my clutches; you, the only person on this whole planet who has ever thwarted my ambitions; and instead of grovelling before me, you merely sympathize with me. How so, you cursed spot of sunshine?"

"You have me in your power, yes," Cabot countered, "but you have had me in your power before. You induced that ant man, whom I called Satan, to try and kill me at Wautoosa, but Doggo interfered. Because of your scheming, the Formians condemned me to the Valley of the Howling Rocks, from whose frightful din no person had ever escaped; but neverthless I got away. You overcame me in the strap-duel in the mangool of Kuana, and your knife was about to enter my heart, when I thumbed your ulnar nerve and made you drop your weapon. You arrested me in the stadium the day you killed your uncle, King Kew; you had Trisp, the bar-mango, destroy my antennae; yet I escaped and rejoined my army. You fed me to the woofuses, but one of them turned on you instead. In just what way do you plan to fail this time?"

"This time there will be no slip-up," Yuri replied grimly. Then, his curiosity getting the better of him, he asked: "But you haven't yet told me why you are sorry for me."

"I am sorry for you," the earthman explained, "because you have missed your opportunities. You had the ability and the following to have led your country to victory over the ants. You would have been a hero and could have had anything that you wanted in the whole kingdom."

"Not Lilla," the prince interjected, with a sneer.

"Yes, even Lilla," Cabot soberly replied.

"Well, I shall have her now," the other asserted. "And 'what ends well, ends well,' as Poblath would say."

"You are incorrigible!" Cabot exclaimed. "And to quote another of Poblath's proverbs, 'The saddest thing about a fool is that he doesn't realize he is one.' "

This irritated Prince Yuri, so he curtly ordered: "Swing to the left at the next crossroad."

"But what is to prevent my stopping the car and turning you over to the pinqui if there is one stationed there?" Cabot asked.

"This revolver," the other replied.

"Not enough," said Cabot. "I could wreck the controls before the bullet could do its work. The pinqui would arrest you. And then where would you be? Yuri, the traitor, in the toils at last! It would be the Valley of the Howling Rocks for you, my friend."

"I am not so sure of that," said the prince. "With you out of the way, methinks I could reconquer Cupia, even from a prison cell. In the past, whenever you have been out of the way, I have always won, and I could do so again."

"Maybe you could," the earthman mused aloud. "So I think I had better remain alive for the present."

Accordingly he turned to the left at the next crossword as he had been directed.

As they approached the battlefront, they were often halted by Cupian sentinels. To each of these Cabot revealed his identity,

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and was permitted to pass. And each time he was sorely tempted to turn Yuri over, even though this would probably mean his own instant annihilation.

What deterred him? Not fear of death, for he had faced death so often on the silver planet that he and the dark angel were well acquainted. Perhaps it was caution, due to uncertainty as to the outcome. If he could but be sure that Yuri would not get the better of the sentinel, that the sentinel would not yield to the temptations which Yuri would undoubtedly offer, that Yuri would not be able to work his way back into power even from the cell of a mangool, that the courts would condemn Yuri to the Valley and then enforce the sentence—if Myles could have been sure of all this, he would have willingly given his life for his adopted country.

Yet would he? For his fatalism assured him that he could risk his own life, and yet come out on top, as he had done before.

Finally there occurred Cabot's last opportunity. They were in a little ravine, almost at the front. The sentinel who halted him refused to let him pass on to no-man's land without permission of the officer in charge of that sector; so the sentinel called another soldier to guard the kerkool and went to summon the officer, who proved to be a young bar-pootah, a stranger to Cabot.

"Excellency," said he, "it must be important business which leads you to risk your life out there, for yonder lie the forces of Formis. The moment that you emerge from this ravine you will be under fire. May I ask what takes our regent into such danger?"

The revolver muzzle of the man crouching hidden beside Cabot, ground into his ribs as a reminder.

"No, you may not," Myles replied.

Then he had an idea.

"Give me two sticks," he said.

So the sentinel cut two branches and affixed them to the front of the kerkool in the form of an X. Crossed sticks—these were the Porovian equivalent of a flag of truce! Then the young bar-pootah let them through.

"You improve," Prince Yuri remarked, as they threaded the ravine and emerged onto the plain beyond.

IT WAS a gruesome scene. Dead bodies of both Cupians and Formians lay strewn about, covered with swarms of little hopping brinks, while among the corpses ambled large orange-colored beetles about three feet in length. Some of these beetles were busily engaged in digging holes, while here and there others of them in large numbers were pulling a body toward a hole which they had dug. These were the burying beetles of Poros.

Cabot carefully steered the kerkool in and out among all these obstructions. His last chance to turn his captor over to the authorities had come and gone. Soon Yuri would be able to take the seat beside him and ride in triumph among his friends.

And then the car began to wobble a bit.

"Hold her steady!" ordered the prince peremptorily. "No fooling! No pretended gyroscope trouble!"

"Don't you realize," Myles replied mildly, "that this is a pretty poor place for me to *pretend* to have gyro troubles? If I were going to fake, I would have done so back there in the ravine."

"That's true," Yuri admitted. "Well, stop her and we'll get out and walk."

Cabot accordingly brought the kerkool to a standstill. Yuri cautiously backed to the rear of the car and dismounted, keeping his prisoner covered with the revolver.

"Come along now," he called. "Get out and unhitch the cross, so that we can carry it as a protection."

For reply the earthman suddenly threw the control into full speed reverse. Down went the astonished prince, his revolver flying from his hand as the kerkool backed onto him. Cabot saw the weapon as it sailed by him; and instantly he stopped the car and reached for his own revolver. But it was not at his side. Quite evidently he had left it at Wautoosa when he had gathered up his accouterments after his sightseeing tour there.

So he jumped from the car and ran over

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to where the prince's weapon lay. With it in his hand, he turned and faced his late captor, who was just picking himself up out of the dust and staggered to his feet.

"Halt," the earthman commanded, "or I fire!"

Yuri halted. Then, to Cabot's surprise, he grinned.

"What was it that you quoted from Poblath a while ago?" he said, with seeming irrelevance. "Oh, I know. 'The saddest thing about a fool, is that he doesn't realize he is one.' That revolver which you now hold, and which terrorized you into bearing me in safety through your lines, is empty, wholly empty! Better throw it away, you poor fool."

And he gave a mocking laugh. Myles flushed with shame and humiliation. Bluffed again by the arch-trickster of Poros! So he started to throw the weapon to one side. Then suddenly he realized what a fool he would be to accept any statement from this liar. Perhaps the prince was bluffing *now*, rather than before. Perhaps the revolver was loaded, after all.

So Myles fired square in that sneering face. But the sneer continued. No explosion followed the pull on the trigger. Merely a little click.

Cabot pulled the trigger five more times, so as to be certain; then flung the revolver square at that still sneering face.

Whereupon Prince Yuri ducked and charged him, and down went the two in a strangle-hold embrace. Ordinarily they would have been a very even match, but the Cupian had recently been drenched in a rainstorm and had just been knocked down and run over by a kerkool; so the earthman easily triumphed. The proud pretender to the throne of Cupia was soon flat on his back, with Cabot's hands about his throat.

But he uttered no appeal. He gamely succumbed. Fiery hate glowed in his eyes, as his adversary slowly cut off his wind; but that was all.

Finally his body became limp and his eyes glazed. This was no kind of a way to kill a man! So Myles withdrew his strangle grasp and listened at his victim's right breast. The heart was still beating.

Cabot arose, seized Prince Yuri's body and started dragging it to the Cupian lines. The prince should be revived and given a fair trial for treason.

But the two never reached the northern edge of no-man's-land, for a Formian bullet brought Myles Cabot to the ground.

A terrible crashing noise in his ears, and then all was over!

AFTER a seemingly interminable time, the earthman became vaguely conscious again. It was twilight. Shadowy forms were dragging him along the ground.

Then he rolled over and over down a steep decline, and shovelfuls of dirt began to land on him from above. One of the shadowy forms descended and pressed upon his abdomen with a blunt instrument of some sort.

Was he dead? Was this hell? Or where was it?

A sharp pain in his abdomen brought him to his senses. He sprang to his feet, throwing off his tormentor, who thereupon let forth a vile smell. Then Cabot realized his situation.

He was standing in a shallow pit in the midst of the battlefield, surrounded by beetles, one of which had just sought to impale him with its ovipositor. These beasts now scattered and left him alone. A live man was no concern of theirs.

Myles felt of his head. His left earphone was smashed and there was a welt on his left temple. He had been merely stunned, rather than killed, or even seriously wounded.

By the aid of the rapidly fading pink glow in the western sky, the weary man picked his way across the battlefield to the little ravine through which he had entered it. There the Cupian bar-pootah took him in charge and dispatched him by kerkool to the nearest army hospital. In a few days he was himself again.

Then Myles Cabot took the field in person, with Poblath as his aide. Bthuh's illness had merely been a bluff, and both

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men were thoroughly disgusted. They had remained behind the lines too long. Now they intended to press the war to a successful conclusion.

Nothing further was seen or heard of the renegade prince, although the ground was dug up all around the wrecked kerkool, in the hope of finding his body.

So, through many weary sangths, the Formians were driven to the southern tip of the continent and totally exterminated. Even their numerous pets—some fifteen hundred varieties—were killed off, too. For, with all the sport loving proclivities of the Cupians, they do not waste very much time and affection on pets.

The only ants spared were the royal husbands. They, poor stupid drones, were not to blame for the tyranny and treachery of their race. So they were shut up in cages in the gr-ool—i. e. zoo—of Kuana, for the edification of the children of Cupia.

The serial numbers of all slain Formians were recorded, even those buried by the beetles being exhumed for this purpose.

The battle for the extreme southern tip of the continent was the fiercest of the entire war; and when finally the last ramparts of the enemy were stormed, there arose from this fortress a considerable fleet of planes. It had not been known that the Formians still had any of these left; but nevertheless the Cupian fliers and their bee allies were ready for them, and instantly rose into the air to meet them. And at the head of the Cupian fleet rode Myles Cabot on the back of Portheris, king of the bees.

But to his surprise and horror, the enemy flew southeast, instead of north, bent on escape rather than on battle. And there was no possible escape in that direction, for the way was barred by the steam clouds which overhung the boiling seas. Probably, therefore, this squadron was due soon to execute some feint. But no, they kept straight on; and before the forces of the earthman could catch up with them, they disappeared within the clouds. Cabot's fleet wheeled and returned, driven back by the intense heat.

Thus perished—presumably—the last of the ant men, for when the Cupian army stormed the fortress from which these had flown, it was devoid of defenders.

No trace of Doggo or of Prince Yuri was ever found. As to Doggo, perhaps he had been slain and his serial number had been incorrectly reported by those who had found his body. Oh perhaps he had been among those who had braved the steam in a heroic attempt to cheat Cabot of his final victory, by a flight to unknown lands beyond the boiling seas.

It was just as well, for Cabot's hands were not drenched with the blood of a friend. His conscience was clear, and yet he was relieved of the embarrassing alternative of having to choose between putting to death one who had saved his life, or permitting to live a member of the proscribed race.

As for Yuri, undoubtedly he, too, had been among these fliers; for never could one of his spirit brook to remain, even in hiding, in a land completely dominated by his enemy and rival, Myles Cabot.

Thus passed from the continent the race of black insects which had long exercised dominion over it. Poros was safe at last.

The stadium was repaired, and an appropriate celebration was held therein. The lands and other property of the Formians were distributed among the war widows and the leading heroes of the Cupian soldiery.

Under the regency of Myles Cabot, Cupia prospered. Luno Castle was rebuilt. Myles and his fellow scientists perfected many devices for the welfare of the people.

Among these devices was a new source of power, namely, a compound engine devised by Cabot himself. Mercury was boiled and its vapor used as steam. The exhaust vapor was condensed, in a water-tube boiler, at such a high temperature that the water turned to steam, which was used to drive a second set of pistons. Thus very little energy was lost. These novel steam engines were located at the coal mines in the northern mountains, thus obviating the transportation of fuel. Huge generators converted the energy into electricity which

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was conveyed to the southward over wireless power lines, made up of the Toron ray. Thus Kuana and the other large cities were supplied with power.

But in the course of his experiments, Cabot found many gaps which he could not fill by his meager recollection of earth devices. And so he finally persuaded the Princess Lilla to permit him to return to the earth for a brief visit. A perfecting of his instrument for the wireless transmission of matter, and several trips between Luno and Kuana, showed that this was entirely feasible.

And so one day he turned the reins of government over to Prince Toron, kissed his wife and baby good-by and stepped between the co-ordinate axes of the huge radio set at Luno Castle, with Toron and Oya Buh at the levers. The next thing that he knew, he was lying on the floor of the laboratory of the General Electric Company in Lynn, Massachusetts, as already recounted.

How he was there attacked by the night operator, how he reached Boston, and how the newspapers thought that he was an escaped inmate of an insane asylum, has been told in the first chapter of this story.

He put up for the night in a cheap Boston lodging house, and early the next morning took the elevated out to Dudley Street, where he had kept a small bank account during college days, under an assumed name, as a provision for possible escapades, which somehow he had never found time to commit. In after years he had maintained this account, largely as a matter of sentiment, and had even, with strange foresight, transferred quite a block of his securities to their safe deposit vault.

It all certainly came in handy that morning. In spite of his absence of five years and his workman clothes, the bank clerk instantly recognized him as the "Mr. M. S. Camp," who had kept an account there, and so cashed a check for him and obligingly arranged for the sale of some of his securities.

Then he returned to town, bought a complete outfit, took a hotel room, and bathed, shaved and changed. Once more he was Myles Standish Cabot, the Bostonian.

His next need was to buy newspapers and magazines, to learn what had happened in the world since he left it. And it was in the course of making these purchases that he ran across an instalment of "The Radio Man," edited by me, and thus was led to make the trip down to my farm.

CHAPTER XXIII

TOO MUCH STATIC

THUS ends the second story of Myles Cabot, the radio man.

The first was written by his own hand, and was shot from Venus to the earth, swathed in the fur of the fire-worm, and concealed in the heart of a streamline projectile. The second he told to me in person from time to time during his stay on my Massachusetts farm on his return to Venus.

The tale was a long time in telling, for Myles, in his assumed name of course, at once matriculated at Harvard to study electricity under Kennelly and Hammond. Although he spent nearly every week-end at my farm, he devoted most of his spare time even here to reading assorted books on nearly every form of practical science, and to the installation of a radio set for the purpose of communicating with his friends and family on Venus, and so as to be prepared to transmit himself back eventually. Hence the two huge steel towers on Cow Hill, which have recently excited the wonder and curiosity of my fellow-townsmen.

Of course, there were many questions which we asked him, when his story was completed. My little daughter Jacqueline was particularly resourceful in this connection.

Almost the moment he finished, she inquired: "And what became of your beautiful pet woofus? Did he die?"

Cabot smiled. Like most Bostonians, he was always very adept with children.

"You never could guess," he replied, "so I will tell you. After the flight of the ants from the stadium, my woofus was found,

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still alive, in one of the passageways beneath the seats, where he had evidently dragged his poor mangled body and hidden himself. His life was spared by some one who recognized him as the beast who had rescued me on the day of the games. Word was brought me, and I at once went to him with Emsul. At my command, the woofus submitted to treatment, and soon recovered. He became a great pet of Lilla and little Kew. Always he lies on guard by the crib while the baby sleeps. And the baby's favorite game when awake is to play horsey astride of his back."

"How cunning!" Jacqueline murmured. "Wouldn't it be nice if we had a pet woofus to take care of Stuart?" Stuart being my own youngest.

But Mrs. Farley was a bit incredulous.

"Mr. Cabot," she asked, "how could Baby Kew know anything about playing horse, seeing as there are no horses in Poros?"

Myles laughed good-naturedly.

"I said 'horse'," he explained, "merely to give an earthly allusion. What the little king thinks he is riding on is a whistling bee."

This suggested another question.

"What of Portheris and his swarm?" I inquired. "Has it never occurred to you that these Hymernians, as you call them, are a race of intelligent beings almost on a par with the Cupians and the Formians, and that, therefore, there are still *two* races of intelligent beings on the Planet Poros? How about your assertion, made in the council hall of the palace at Kuana, that 'there is no room on any given planet for more than one race of intelligent beings?' "

Cabot tried to laugh it off, but I could see that the suggestion worried him.

"The Hymernians are not exactly human," he objected.

"Neither were the ants," I countered.

After which he remained for some time in abstracted silence, evidently turning over the possibilities in his mind.

Finally he came out with: "Portheris I can trust. And his followers will be all right, so long as my people keep them supplied with plenty of green cows to eat. Toron, the regent, and Kamel, our leader in the Assembly, realize the need of that."

AT THIS point little Jacqueline had a suggestion:

"Suppose Prince Yuri didn't die in his flight across the boiling seas. Suppose he comes back and organizes the bees against your people. What then?"

"That is the least of my worries," Myles answered, smiling. "No one could live in that heat. No, I am confident that Yuri is dead, or I never would have dared to make this trip back to earth."

But, I fear, all the same, that we sowed the seeds of some serious worries in the mind of our guest.

Myles Cabot's story was finished, except for his answers to various questions which we asked him from time to time. For instance, how it was possible for my friend to have worn a set of such short wave length on his person, without body capacity playing hob with his adjustment. I had not been able to give them a satisfactory answer. So now I put that question up to Cabot.

"Very simple," said he, laughing, "for, as my apparatus was fixed firmly upon me, my body capacity was invariable, and so could be reckoned with like any other constant. But some radio fan is likely to refuse to accept that statement, and to come back with the suggestion that when I moved my hand to adjust the controls, I would bring into play a wonderfully efficient variable capacity, consisting of my hand and my abdomen as two connected plates."

"Well, wouldn't he be right?" I asked. "Doesn't that completely floor you? It sounds reasonable enough, with what little I know of radio."

Cabot laughed again, and replied: "If that could floor me, it would mean that I never could have talked to Cupians, to ant men, and to whistling bees on Poros. But it is true that I did experience considerable difficulty from that quarter. Nevertheless I eliminated all the trouble by enclosing, in

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a copper sheath, my belt, and the batteries, bulbs and tuning means which it carried; and by running my lead wires through a copper tube. This had the bad feature of slightly increasing the capacity of my apparatus, but it eliminated entirely all outside interference. Only when I put my hands near my antennae was my receptivity disturbed."

As they would say on Poros, that was an antennaeful!

Of course, Mrs. Farley, womanlike, had to ask him if his radio set, which he always wore on Poros, was not awfully uncomfortable.

"Not at all!" he replied. "I see that you wear glasses. Do they not bother you?"

"No," she said. "At first they did, but now I really never notice I have them on."

"And I'll venture to state," he asserted, "that they are as natural to you as a part of your own body; that you never bother about them, except to adjust them or to clean them occasionally; and that, even then, you do it unconsciously and instinctively?"

"Yes," she admitted.

"Well, that is just the way my artificial speech organs are to me."

Shortly after, or perhaps it was during, his narration of his adventures, it occurred to me to ask him about the device which had shot him from Poros back to earth.

"How were you able to transmit yourself through space?" I inquired.

"That is a secret known only to Prince Toron, Oya Buh and myself. I doubt if the world is ready for it. And yet, it is very simple. Invention merely consists in realizing a need, and then in devising means to fulfill that need."

"Humph! Absurdly simple, isn't it?" I interjected sarcastically, for I was peeved at his superior tone.

"It really is," he replied a bit hurt, "and furthermore, the biggest part of invention consists in merely realizing the need. Once this is done, the means of filling the need can usually be found, staring one in the face, just waiting to be used."

"And what simple means stared you in the face when you realized the need of projecting yourself back to earth?" asked Mrs. Farley, doubtless hoping to steer him gently around to a description of his device.

This was exactly the result of her question. The answer was full of intense scientific interest. For the next ten or twelve minutes, Myles Cabot regaled us with a detailed technical explanation of his apparatus, finally ending up with: "I hope you understand this somewhat sketchy and involved exposition."

We didn't, but we said we did. In those days I knew little of radio. But in the months which followed the reappearance of Myles Cabot, I learned many things of which the world as yet little dreams, but which I have not his permission to disclose.

The details of his apparatus for transmitting objects through space were not, however, again imparted, and so I am unable to describe it here.

Between the various members of the family, we asked him many questions about the present status of the principal characters of his story.

Poblath, the philosopher, had become mangool of Kuana again, and was thinking of publishing his proverbs in book form. His dark and beautiful wife, Bthuh, was still lady-in-waiting to the Princess Lilla. Emsul, the veterinary, and Mitchfix, the trophil engine expert, were given associate professorships in their respective subjects at the Royal University of Kuana. Colonel Wotsn was made chief of the palace guards, in recognition of his assuming command of the palace the day it was seized, and of his subsequent rescue of Myles Cabot. Buh Tedn recovered from his wounds and resumed his duties at the University. Hah Babbuh was admitted to the nobility as a Sarkar, and was made field marshal, the rank which he had virtually occupied all during the war. Kamel, now a Sarkar, too, and no longer a pacifist and radical, became the leader of the court party in the Assembly. And, as already stated, the loyal Prince Toron assumed the regency during Myles Cabot's visit to the earth.

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One more point. I asked Myles why he had not brought his wonderful portable radio set down with him, to show to us.

"You forget," was his reply, "that, for some unexplained reason, my apparatus will not transmit metals through space. Do you not remember all the steel buttons, gartersnaps and other metallic objects which were left behind in my Beacon Street laboratory that day when I disappeared from the earth?"

True! Now, that he mentioned it, I did remember. It would never be possible to bring any such Porovian souvenirs down to our own planet.

And that will be about all of Poros for the present. Let us now turn our attention to Myles Cabot on earth.

His life with us was very regular. From Monday until Friday of every week he attended Harvard. His week-ends he devoted to study and, with some slight assistance from myself and family and farmhands, to erecting the two huge steel towers on Cow Hill, and to installing his apparatus in a shack which we built at their base. This apparatus comprised a long-range long-wavelength sending and receiving set, and a matter-transmitting set.

Finally both were completed. One Sunday night in October, at the end of an unusually sultry day for that time of year, Cabot came down to supper full of suppressed excitement.

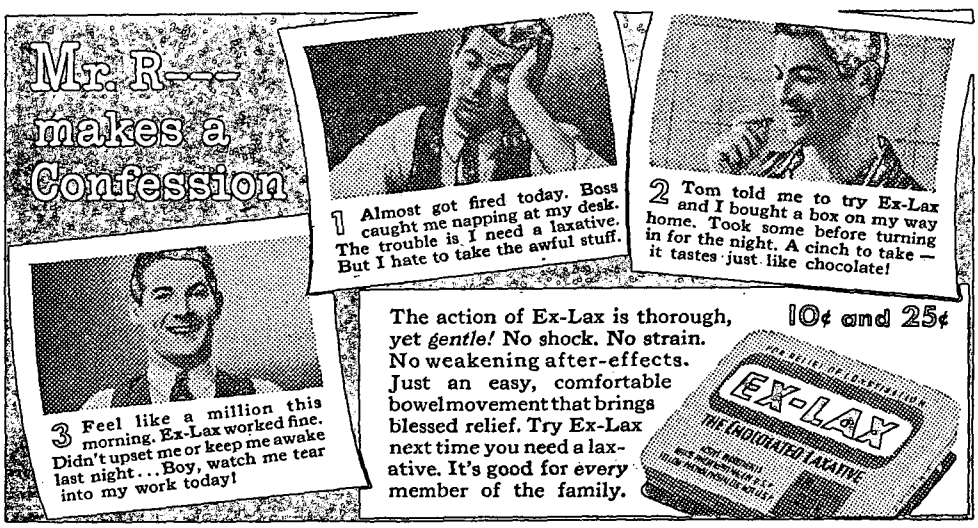
"I have nearly gotten Luno Castle on the air," he announced, "but there is too much static to-night. Poor dear Lilla, she must be worried about me, for not a word have I sent her to let her know of my safe arrival. But I will get her to-night, if the static will only let up for a few minutes."

"Why haven't you used the G. E. set in Lynn?" I asked.

"I had thought of that," Myles replied. "In fact I planned to do so, before I left Poros. But unfortunately they have recently dismantled their set, for the purpose of rebuilding it, and I could not very well ask them to hurry, without revealing my identity, which would never do, for that would get me so much publicity that my dear cousins would undoubtedly have me locked up in the asylum on the strength of my absurd belief that I have been on Venus. If they did that, then how could I ever get back to that planet again? My cousins would just as leave get hold of my property through a conservatorship, as by inheriting it. That lets Lynn out! But my set here is now complete, and is the equal of the G. E. installation; so I'll talk to my princess to-night, if the static will only let up."

He seemed very happy.

AFTER the evening meal was over, he lit a lantern and started back to his laboratory. As we accompanied him to


Mr. R—— makes a Confession
1 Almost got fired today. Boss caught me napping at my desk. The trouble is I need a laxative. But I hate to take the awful stuff.
2 Tom told me to try Ex-Lax and I bought a box on my way home. Took some before turning in for the night. A cinch to take — it tastes just like chocolate!
3 Feel like a million this morning. Ex-Lax worked fine. Didn't upset me or keep me awake last night... Boy, watch me tear into my work today!
The action of Ex-Lax is thorough, yet gentle! No shock. No strain. No weakening after-effects. Just an easy, comfortable bowel movement that brings blessed relief. Try Ex-Lax next time you need a laxative. It's good for every member of the family.
10¢ and 25¢
EX-LAX
THE CHOCOLATED LAXATIVE

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the door, he pointed to the evening sky.

"Late to-night, long after midnight," said he, "there will appear above that horizon the star which holds all that is dear to me in this universe. My wife, my child, my people, and my home. Good night. Do not sit up for me. I may be very late."

It was a sultry night. Not a breath was stirring. Storm clouds hung dark in the west with heat-lightning playing intermittently across their face. An occasional October asteroid flitted fireflylike through the sky. The weather was too oppressive to think of going to bed, so we sat up and waited for Myles Cabot. It got very late. But still he did not come.

Finally, along toward morning, the storm broke. I was for going up to Cow Hill to see how Myles was getting along, but Mrs. Farley restrained me.

"He has oilskins in the laboratory, if he wishes to come down," she said. "In the meantime, leave him alone. He is phoning to his sweetheart, and ought not to be disturbed. When you were courting me, you never used to phone to me in public."

"Nor in a thunderstorm either," was my reply.

The rain fell in torrents, and the lightning was very vivid, though I suppose that the storm was a mere trifle compared with those which Cabot describes as occurring on Poros. Finally the weather began to clear; but not without a Parthian shot, which fell so close that the lightning and the thunder-clap seemed simultaneous. When the next flash came, the momentary light revealed the fact that only one of the two towers remained standing on Cow Hill.

Myles might be in trouble! Seizing my sou'wester and a lantern, I hurried out into the night. The rain had now stopped. The sky had begun to clear. As I neared the wireless station, I could see that the stricken tower had fallen across one end of the laboratory, caving it in. This was the end which held most of the apparatus, so I quickened my pace and flung open the door.

But Myles Cabot was not there. One glance satisfied me on that score. Probably he had passed me, without my noticing him, my gaze having been fixed intently on the hill.

Next I explored the room to ascertain the extent of the damage. The matter-transmitting apparatus was hopelessly wrecked; the radio set partially so. The head phones were lying on his desk, and by their side a pencil and pad. The pad was all scribbled over with letters, as though Myles had been trying to take down a message.

These letters made no sense at all, until the end of the sheet, where suddenly they stood forth with unexpected vividness and distinctness "S.O.S. Lilla."

Only that, and nothing more.

This led me to hunt for further clews, and I found just what I expected. For, amid the ruins of the matter-transmitting apparatus, there lay a pile of metallic objects; a pocket knife, suspender buttons, garter clasps and such, as on that first day five years and a half ago, when Myles Cabot had disappeared from his laboratory in Boston.

We never saw or heard from him again.

But we have often wondered, Mrs. Farley, Jacqueline and I, just what was the dire trouble that led the Princess Lilla to send through space that frantic call for help, and whether Myles got back to Venus in time to save her.

THE END

The sequel to this story is "The Radio Planet"

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The Science Fiction Fan Movement

By ERLE KORSHAK

ONE of the oldest and strongest of the Science Fiction clubs was the Science Fiction League, an organization founded by a young fan, Charles D. Hornig. Under its sponsorship, organizations that are still going today were founded, comprising a nation-wide movement.

Such clubs as the Los Angeles SFL, the Queens, L. I., SFL, the Maine SFL, the Philly SFL, and many others, both in this country and abroad sprang into being under the mother organization. After a while some of these chapters broke away from the League and either changed their names or kept the League name and continued under their own sponsorship.

Among these we have New Fandom, which was organized for the purpose of sponsoring the 1939 World's Science Fiction Convention, which was held in New York City the summer before last. This convention was a great success and drew hundreds of fans, authors, artists and editors of science fiction. Another is the Futurian Society of New York, the members of which live in a fraternity house plan in Brooklyn.

Also we have the Illini Fantasy Fictioneers, a group organized to sponsor the "Chicago in 1940 World's Science Fiction Convention."

UNDOUBTEDLY the most important science fiction event of 1940 was this convention, which was held at the famous Hotel Chicagoan over the Labor Day holidays. One hundred and fifty persons were in attendance.

Among those there were Edward Elmer "Skylark" Smith (Dr. Smith was the guest of honor), Ralph Milne Farley, famed author of the "Radio Man Stories," Jerry Siegal, comic strip author; Helen Weinbaum, wife of the late Stanley G. Weinbaum; Otto Binder, Robert Moore Williams, Ross Rocklynne, Charles Tanner, Raymond A. Palmer, Julian Krupa, Mort Weisinger, Julius Schwartz, Don Wilcox, etc., etc., and such fans as Forrest J. Ackerman, Morojo, Pogo, Paul Freehafer, Bob Tucker, myself, Mark Reinsberg, Marvis Manning, Richard I. Meyer, Olom Wiggins, Gertrude Kuslan, Hyman Tiger, Dale Tarr, Jack Chapman Miske, Ted Dikty, Fred Shroyer, Bob Madle, Julius Unger, Art Widner, Jr., George Tullis, Donald A. Wollheim, Robert W. "Doc" Lowndes, Jack Speer, Elmer Perdue, Milton Rothman, Lew Martin, etc.

There were interesting sessions during the two official and several unofficial days that the big affair lasted. On the first day we had the introductions by the Master of Ceremonies (your correspondent) and speeches by all the fans and professionals present. The various editors each gave a talk, and several "good wishes" talks were carried by representatives of those editors absent. Robert W. Lowndes gave an excellent address from the editor of FANTASTIC NOVELS to the assembly. Other fine speeches were delivered by Dr. Smith, Bob Tucker, the director of the Illini Fantasy Fictioneers (sponsoring group of the Chicon), Mark Reinsberg, the chairman of the Convention Committee, Richard I. Meyer, Raymond A. Palmer and Mort Weisinger. Also that afternoon was the World Premier of a fantastic picture that was never before shown to the public, as it was "shelved." The picture, "Monsters of the Moon," was obtained for the Convention by Forrest J. Ackerman.

THAT night came the science fiction masquerade party and the auction. At the auction many fine stf items were sold, including books, magazines, and original cover and interior illustrations from the magazines. One of the best covers there was the Finlay "Darkness and Dawn" cover given the convention by FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES. At the party David Kyle won first prize as Ming the Merciless, while Doc Lowndes took a close second as the Bar Senestro (remember "The Blind Spot"?). Third prize went to Ackerman and Morojo as the man and woman of the future.

On the second day came the business meeting. Most important piece of business on the docket was the site of the next convention. It was decided that Denver in 1941 is the place. On the evening of the second day the honor banquet was held with "Skylark" Smith as guest of honor. A time second to none was had by all.

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The People of the Pit

They were things of dread some god of evil had made before the Flood—

By A. MERRITT

NORTH of us a shaft of light shot half way to the zenith. It came from behind the ragged mountain, toward which we had been pushing all day. The beam drove up through a column of blue haze whose edges were marked as sharply as the rain that streams from the edges of a thunder cloud. It was like the flash of a searchlight through an azure mist and it cast no shadows.

As it struck upward the five-summits were outlined hard and black, and we saw that the whole mountain was shaped like a hand. As the light silhouetted it, the gigantic fingers of the peaks seemed to stretch; the bulk that was the plain of the hand to push. It was exactly as though it moved to thrust something back. The shining beam held steady for a moment; then broke into myriads of tiny luminous globes that swung to and fro and dropped gently. They seemed to be searching.

The forest had become very still. Every wood noise held its breath. I felt the dogs pressing against my legs. They, too, were silent; but every muscle in their bodies trembled, their hair was stiff along their backs, and their eyes, fixed on the falling phosphorescent sparks, were filmed with the terror-glaze. I looked at Starr Anderson. He was staring at the North where once more the beam had pulsed upward.

"'The mountain shaped like a hand!'" I spoke without moving my lips. My mouth was as dry as though Lao T'zai had poured his fear-dust down my throat.

"It's the mountain we've been looking for," he answered in the same tone.

"But that light—what is it? Not the aurora surely," I said.

"Whoever heard of an aurora at this time of the year?"

He voiced the thought that was in my own mind.

"It makes me think something is being hunted up there," he said. "That the lights are seeking—an unholy sort of hunt—it's well for us to be out of range."

"The mountain seems to move each time the shaft shoots up," I said. "What's it keeping back, Starr? It makes me think of the frozen hand of cloud that Shan Nadour set before the Gate of Ghouls to keep them in the lairs that Eblis cut for them."

He raised a hand, listening.

From the north and high over head there came a whispering. It was not the rustling of the aurora, that rushing crackling sound like the ghosts of winds that blew at Creation racing through the skeleton leaves of ancient trees that sheltered Lilith. This whispering held in it a demand. It was eager. It called us to come up where the beam was flashing. It—drew!

There was in it a note of inexorable insistence. It touched my heart with a thousand tiny fear-tipped fingers and it filled me with a vast longing to race on and merge myself in the light. It must have been so that Ulysses felt when he strained at the mast and strove to obey the crystal sweet singing of the sirens.

The whispering grew louder.

"What the hell's the matter with those dogs?" cried Starr Anderson savagely. "Look at them!"

The malemiuts, whining, were racing toward the light. We saw them disappear among the trees. There came back to us a

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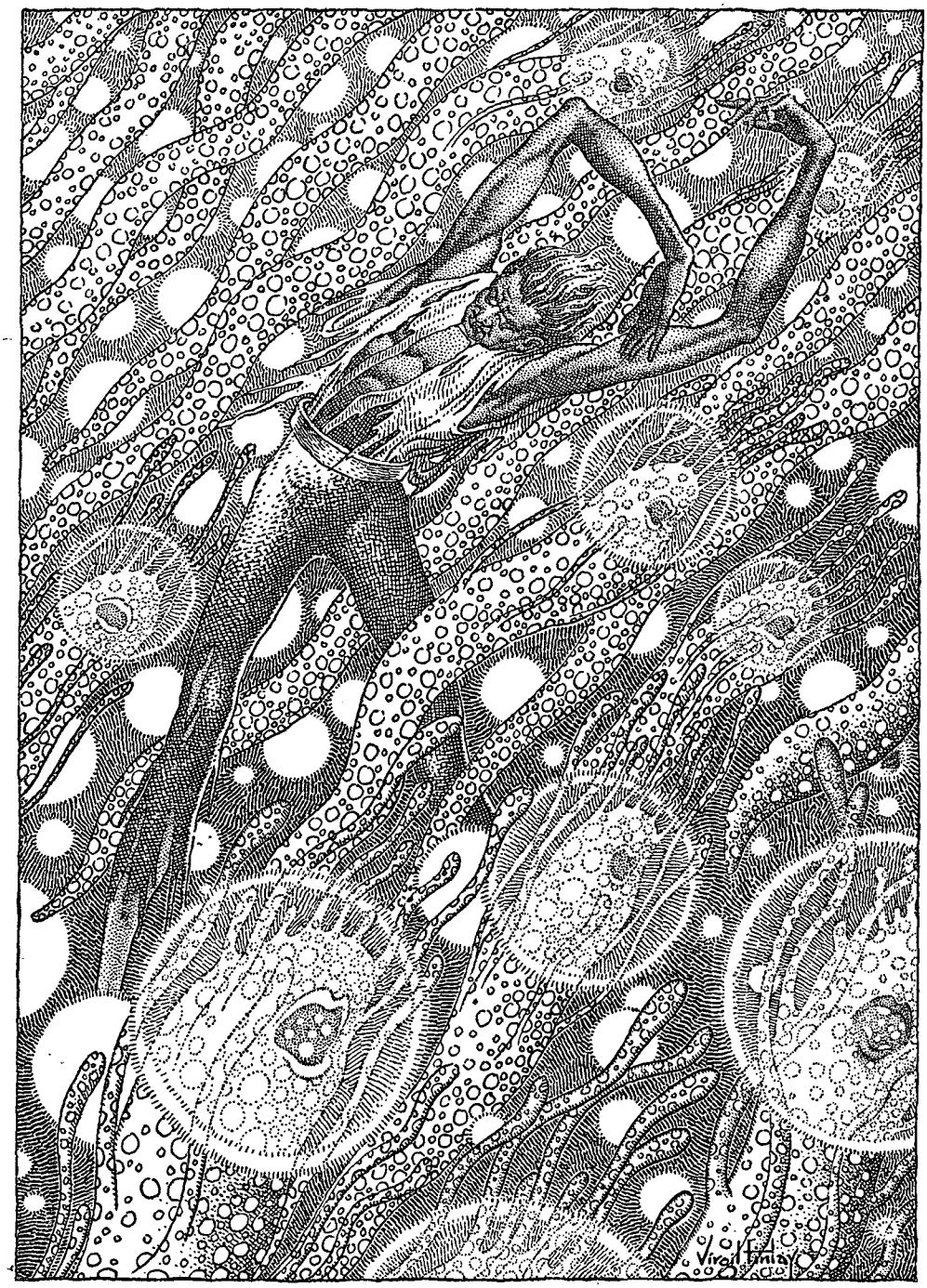

I was—Heaven forgive me!—in movement and sound, one of these nameless things. . . . Great transparent bodies like specters of loathsome slugs, dozens of waving tentacles stretching from them, they floated . . . and I floated with them though my soul was sick with horror

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mournful howling. Then that too died away and left nothing but the insistent murmuring overhead.

The glade we had camped in looked straight to the North. We had reached, I suppose, three hundred miles above the first great bend of the Kuskokwim toward the Yukon. Certainly we were in an untrodden part of the wilderness. We had pushed through from Dawson at the breaking of the spring, on a fair lead to a lost mountain between five peaks of which, so the Athabascan medicine man had told us, the gold streams out like putty from a clenched fist.

Not an Indian were we able to get to go with us. The land of the Hand Mountain was accursed, they said.

WE HAD sighted a mountain the night before, its ragged top faintly outlined against a pulsing glow. And now by the light that had led us we saw that it was the very place we had sought.

Anderson stiffened. Through the whispering had broken a curious pad-pad and a rustling. It sounded as though a small bear was moving toward us.

I threw a pile of wood on the fire and as it blazed up saw something break through the bushes. It walked on all fours, but it did not walk like a bear. All at once it flashed upon me—it was like a baby crawling upstairs. The forepaws lifted themselves in grotesquely infantile fashion. It was grotesque but it was—terrible. It drew closer. We reached for our guns—and dropped them. Suddenly we knew that this crawling thing was a man!

It was a man. Still with that high climbing pad-pad he swayed to the fire. He stopped.

"Safe," whispered the crawling man in a voice that was an echo of the whispering overhead. "Quite safe here. They can't get out of the blue, you know. They can't get you—unless you answer them—"

"He's mad," Anderson said, and then gently to this broken thing that had been a man: "You're all right—there's nothing after you."

"Don't answer them," repeated the crawling man, "the lights, I mean."

"The lights," I cried, startled even out of pity. "What are they?"

"The People of the Pit!" he murmured.

He fell upon his side. We ran to him. Anderson knelt.

"God's love!" he said. "Frank, look at this!"

He pointed to the hands. The wrists were covered with torn rags of a heavy shirt. The hands themselves were—stumps! The fingers had been bent into the palms and the flesh had been worn to the bone. They looked like the feet of a black elephant! My eyes traveled down the body. Around the waist was a heavy yellow metal band. From it fell a ring and a dozen links of shining white chain!

"What is he? Where did he come from?" said Anderson. "Look, he's fast asleep—yet even in his sleep his arms try to climb and his feet draw themselves up one after the other! And his knees—how in God's name has he ever been able to move on them?"

It was even as he said. In the deep sleep that had come upon the crawler, arms and legs kept raising in a deliberate, dreadful climbing motion. It was as though they had a life of their own—they kept their movement independently of the motionless body. They were semaphoric motions. If you have ever stood at the back of a train and watched the semaphores rise and fall you will know exactly what I mean.

Abruptly overhead the whispering ceased. The shaft of light dropped and did not rise again. The crawling man became still. A gentle glow began to grow around us. The short Alaskan summer night was over. Anderson rubbed his eyes and turned to me a haggard face.

"Man!" he exclaimed. "You look as though you have been sick!"

"No more than you, Starr," I said. "That was sheer, stark horror! What do you make of it all?"

"I'm thinking our only answer lies there," he answered, pointing to the figure that lay so motionless under the blankets

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we had thrown over him. "Whatever they were—that's what they were after. There was no aurora about those lights, Frank. It was like the flaring up of some queer hell the preacher folk never frighten us with."

"We'll go no further today," I said. "I wouldn't wake him for all the gold that runs between the fingers of the five peaks—nor for all the devils that may be behind them."

The crawling man lay in a sleep as deep as the Styx. We bathed and bandaged the pads that had been his hands. Arms and legs were as rigid as though they were crutches. He did not move while we worked over him. He lay as he had fallen, the arms a trifle raised, the knees bent.

I began filing the band that ringed the sleeper's waist. It was gold, but it was like no gold I had ever handled. Pure gold is soft. This was soft too—but it had an unclean, viscid life of its own.

It clung to the file and I could have sworn that it writhed like a live thing when I cut into it. I gashed through it, bent it away from the body and hurled it away. It was—loathsome!

All that day the crawler slept. Darkness came and still he slept. But that night there was no shaft of blue haze from behind the peaks, no questing globes of light, no whispering. Some spell of horror seemed withdrawn—but not far. Both Anderson and I felt that the menace was there, withdrawn perhaps, but waiting.

IT WAS noon next day when the crawling man awoke. I jumped as the pleasant drawling voice sounded.

"How long have I slept?" he said. His pale blue eyes grew quizzical as I stared at him.

"A night—and almost two days," I said.

"Were there any lights up there last night?" He nodded to the North eagerly. "Any whispering?"

"Neither," I answered. His head fell back and he stared up at the sky.

"They've given it up, then?" he said at last.

"Who have given it up?" asked Anderson.

And once more—"The People of the Pit!" the crawling man answered.

We stared at him and again faintly I, for one, felt that queer, maddening desire that the lights had brought with them.

"The People of the Pit," he repeated. "Things some god of evil made before the Flood and that somehow have escaped the good God's vengeance. They were calling me!" he added simply.

Anderson and I looked at each other, the same thought in both our minds.

"No," said the crawling man, reading what it was, "I'm not insane. Give me a very little drink. I'm going to die soon. Will you take me as far South as you can before I die? And afterwards will you build a big fire and burn me? I want to be in such shape that no hellish wile of theirs can drag my body back to them. You'll do it when I've told you about them," he said as we hesitated.

He drank the brandy and water we lifted to his lips.

"Arms and legs quite dead," he said. "Dead as I'll soon be. Well, they did well for me. Now I'll tell you what's up there behind that hand. Hell!

"Listen. My name is Stanton—Sinclair Stanton. Class 1900, Yale. Explorer. I started away from Dawson last year to hunt for five peaks that rose like a hand in a haunted country and ran pure gold between them. Same thing you were after? I thought so. Late last fall my comrade sickened. I sent him back with some Indians. A little later my Indians found out what I was after. They ran away from me. I decided to stick, built a cabin, stocked myself with food and lay down to winter it. Did it not badly—it was a pretty mild winter you'll remember. In the spring I started off again. A little less than two weeks ago I sighted the five peaks. Not from this side though—the other. Give me some more brandy.

"I'd made too wide a detour," he went on. "I'd gotten too far north. I beat back. From this side you see nothing but forest

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straight up to the base of the hand. Over on the other side—"

He was silent for a moment.

"Over there is forest too. But it doesn't reach so far. No! I came out of it. Stretching for miles in front of me was a level plain. It was as worn and ancient looking as the desert around the broken shell of Babylon. At its end rose the peaks. Between me and them—far off—was what looked like a low dike of rocks. Then—I ran across the road!"

"The road!" cried Anderson incredulously.

"The road," said the crawling man. "A fine, smooth, stone road. It ran straight on to the mountain. Oh, it was a road all right—and worn as though millions and millions of feet had passed over it for thousands of years. On each side of it were sand and heaps of stones. After a while I began to notice these stones. They were cut, and the shape of the heaps somehow gave me the idea that a hundred thousand years ago they might have been the ruins of houses. They were as old looking as that. I sensed man about them and at the same time they smelled of immemorial antiquity.

"The peaks grew closer. The heaps of ruins thicker. Something inexpressibly desolate hovered over them, something sinister; something reached from them that struck my heart like the touch of ghosts so old that they could be only the ghosts of ghosts. I went on.

"And now I saw that what I had thought to be the low rock range at the base of the peaks was a thicker litter of ruins. The Hand Mountain was really much farther off. The road itself passed through these ruins and between two high rocks that raised themselves like a gateway."

The crawling man paused. His hands began that sickening pad-pad again. Little drops of bloody sweat showed on his forehead. But after a moment or two he grew quiet. He smiled.

"They were a gateway," he said. "I reached them. I went between them. I sprawled flat, clutching the earth in awe and terror. For I was on a broad stone platform. Before me was—sheer space! Imagine the Grand Canyon three times as wide, roughly circular and with the bottom dropped out. That would be something like what I was looking into.

"It was like peeping over the edge of a cleft world down into infinity where the planets roll! On the far side stood the five peaks. They looked like a gigantic warning hand stretched up to the sky. The lips of the abyss curved away on each side of me.

"I could see down perhaps a thousand feet. Then a thick blue haze shut out the eye. It was like the blue you see gather on the high hills at dusk. But the pit—it was awesome! Awesome as the Maori's Gulf of Ranalak, that sinks between the living and the dead and that only the freshly released soul has strength to leap—but never strength again to leap back.

"I CREPT back from the verge and stood up, weak, shaking. My hand rested against one of the rocks of the gateway. There was carving upon it. There in sharp outlines was the heroic figure of a man. His back was turned. His arms were stretched above his head and between them he carried something that looked like a sun disk with radiating lines of light. There were symbols on the disk that reminded me of Chinese. But they were not Chinese. No! They had been made by hands that had been dust ages before the Chinese stirred in the womb of time.

"I looked at the opposite rock. It bore an exactly similar figure. There was an odd peaked head-dress on both. The rocks themselves were triangular and the carvings were on the side closest the pit. The gesture of the men seemed to be that of holding something back—of barring. I looked closer. Behind the outstretched hands and the disks I seemed to see a host of vague shapes and, plainly a multitude of globes.

"I traced them out vaguely. Suddenly I felt unaccountably sick. There had come to me an impression—I can't call it sight

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—an impression of enormous upright slugs. Their swollen bodies seemed to dissolve, then swim into sight, then dissolve again—all except the globes which were their heads and that remained clear. They were—unutterably loathsome. Overcome by an inexplicable and overpowering nausea I stretched myself upon the slab. And then—I saw the stairway that led down into the pit!"

"A stairway!" we cried.

"A stairway," repeated the crawling man as patiently as before. "It seemed not so much carved out of the rock as built into it. Each slab was perhaps twenty feet long and five feet wide. They ran down from the platform and vanished into the blue haze."

"A stairway," said Anderson incredulously, "built into the wall of a precipice and leading down into a bottomless pit—"

"Not bottomless," interrupted the crawling man. "There was a bottom. Yes. I reached it." He paused again. "I reached it," he went on dully. "Down the stairway—down the stairway."

He seemed to grip his mind.

"Yes," he went on firmly. "I went down the stairway. But not that day. I made my camp back of the gates. At dawn I filled my knapsack with food, my two canteens with water from a spring that wells up there by the gateway, walked between the carved monoliths and stepped over the edge of the pit.

"The steps run along the side of the pit at a forty degree pitch. As I went down and down I studied them. They were of a greenish rock quite different from the granitic porphyry that formed the wall of the pit. At first I thought that the builders had taken advantage of an outcropping stratum, and had carved the gigantic flight from it. But the regularity of the angle at which it fell made me doubtful.

"After I had gone down perhaps half a mile I stepped out upon a landing. From this landing the stairs made a V-shaped turn and again ran on downward, clinging to the cliff at the same angle as the first flight. After I had made three of these turns I knew that the steps dropped straight down to wherever they went in a succession of such angles. No strata could be so regular as that. No, the stairway was built by hands! But whose? And why? The answer is in those ruins around the edge of the pit—never I think to be read.

"By noon I had lost sight of the lip of the abyss. Above me, below me, was nothing but the blue haze. Beside me, too, was nothingness, for the further breast of rock had long since vanished in the same haze. I felt no dizziness, and no fear; only a vast curiosity. What was I to discover? Some ancient and wonderful civilization that had ruled when the poles were tropical gardens? A new world? The key to the mystery of man himself? Nothing living, I felt sure—all was too old for life. Still, a work so wonderful must lead to something quite as wonderful I knew. What was it? I went on.

"At regular intervals I had passed the mouths of small caves. There would be three thousand steps and then an opening, three thousand more steps and an opening—and so on and on. Late that afternoon I stopped before one of these clefts. I suppose I had gone then three miles down the pit, although the angles were such that I had walked in all fully ten miles. I examined the entrance. On each side were carved the same figures as on the great portals at the lip of the pit. But now they were standing face forward, the arms outstretched with their disks, as though holding something back from the shaft itself. Now, too, their faces were covered with veils and there were no hideous shapes behind them.

"I went inside the cave. It ran back for twenty yards like a burrow. It was dry and perfectly light. I could see, outside, the blue haze rising upward like a column. I felt an extraordinary sense of security, although I had not been conscious of any fear. I felt that the figures at the entrance were guardians—but against what? I felt so secure that even curiosity on this point was dulled.

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"The blue haze thickened and grew faintly luminescent. I fancied that it was the dusk above. I ate and drank a little and slept. When I awoke the blue had lightened again, and I fancied it was dawn above. I went on. I forgot the gulf yawning at my side. I felt no fatigue and little hunger or thirst, although I had drunk and eaten sparingly. That night I spent within another of the caves. And at dawn I descended again.

"It was late that day when I first saw the city—" He was silent for a time.

"The city," he said at last. "The city of the pit! But not such a city as you have ever seen—nor any other man who has lived to tell it. The pit, I think, must be shaped like a bottle; the opening before the five peaks is the neck. But how wide the bottom is I do not know—thousands of miles, maybe. And what may lay behind the city—I do not know.

"I had begun to catch little glints of light far down in the blue. Then I saw the tops of—trees, I suppose they are. But not our kind of trees—unpleasant, reptilian trees. They reared themselves on high thin trunks and their tops were nests of thick tendrils with ugly little leaves like narrow heads—or snake heads.

"The trees were red, a vivid, angry red. Here and there I began to glimpse spots of shining yellow. I knew these were water because I could see things breaking through their surface—or at least I could see the splash and ripple but what it was that disturbed them I never saw.

"STRAIGHT beneath me was the—city. Mile after mile of closely packed cylinders that lay upon their sides in pyramids of three, of five—of dozens—piled upon each other. It is so hard to make you see what that city is like—look, suppose you have water pipes of a certain length and first you lay three of them side by side and on top of them you place two, on these two one; or suppose you take five for a foundation and place on these four and then three, then two and then one. Do you see? That was the way they looked.

"And they were topped by towers, by minarets, by flares, by fans and twisted monstrosities. They gleamed as though coated with pale rose flame. Beside them the venomous trees raised themselves like the heads of hydras guarding nests of gigantic jeweled and sleeping worms!

"A few feet beneath me the stairway jutted out into a titanic arch, unearthly as the span that bridges Hell and leads to Asgard. It curved out and down straight through the top of the highest pile of carven cylinders and then—it vanished through it. It was appaling—it was demonic—"

The crawling man stopped. His eyes rolled up into his head. He trembled and again his arms and legs began their horrible crawling movement. From his lips came a whispering. It was an echo of the high murmuring we had heard the night he came to us. I put my hands over his eyes. He quieted.

"The thing's accursed!" he said. "The People of the Pit! Did I whisper? Yes—but they can't get me now—they can't!"

After a time he began as quietly as before.

"I crossed the span. I went down through the top of that building. Blue darkness shrouded me for a moment and I felt the steps twist into a spiral. I wound down and then I was standing high up in—I can't tell you what. I'll have to call it a room. We have no images for what is in the pit. A hundred feet below me was the floor. The walls sloped down and out from where I stood in a series of widening crescents. The place was colossal—and it was filled with a curious mottled red light. It was like the light inside a green and gold flecked fire opal. The spiral stairs wound below me. I went down to the last step. Far in front of me rose a high columned altar. Its pillars were carved in monstrous scrolls—like mad octopuses with a thousand drunken tentacles; they rested on the backs of shapeless monstrosities carved in crimson stone. The altar front was a gigantic slab of purple covered with carvings.

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"I can't describe these carvings! No human being could—the human eye cannot grasp them any more than it can grasp shades that haunt the fourth dimension. Only a subtle sense in the back of the brain grasped them vaguely. They were formless things that gave no conscious image, yet pressed into the mind like small hot seals—ideas of hate—of combats between unthinkable monstrous things—victories in a nebulous hell of steaming, obscene jungles—aspirations and ideals immeasurably loathsome—

"And as I stood I grew aware of something that lay behind the lip of the altar fifty feet above me. I knew it was there—I felt it with every hair and every tiny bit of my skin. Something infinitely malignant, infinitely horrible, infinitely ancient. It lurked, it brooded, it saw me, it threatened and it—was invisible!

"Behind me was a circle of blue light. Something urged me to turn back to climb the stairs and make away. It was impossible. Terror of that unseen watching thing behind the altar raced me onward like a whirlwind. I passed through the circle. I was in a way that stretched on into dim distance between the rows of carven cylinders.

"Here and there the red trees arose. Between them rolled the stone burrows. And now I could take in the amazing ornamentation that clothed them. They were like the trunks of smooth skinned trees that had fallen and had been clothed with high reaching fantastic orchids. Yes—those cylinders were like that—and more. They should have gone out with the dinosaurs. They were—monstrous! They struck the eyes like a blow and they passed across the nerves like a rasp. And nowhere was there sight or sound of a living thing.

"There were circular openings in the cylinders like the opening in the temple of the stairway through which I had run. I passed through one of them. I was in a long bare vaulted room whose curving sides half closed twenty feet over my head, leaving a wide slit that opened into another vaulted chamber above. I saw nothing in the room save the same mottled reddish light of the temple.

"I stumbled. Still I could see nothing, but—my skin prickled and my heart stopped! There was something on the floor over which I had tripped!

"I reached down—and my hand touched a—thing—cold and smooth—that moved under it—I turned and ran out of that place. I was filled with a sick loathing that had in it something of madness—I ran on and on—blindly—wringing my hands—weeping with horror—

"WHEN I came to myself I was still among the stone cylinders and red trees. I tried to retrace my steps, to find the temple—for now I was more than afraid. I was like a new soul panic-stricken with the first terrors of hell. But I could not find the temple! And the haze began to thicken and glow; the cylinders to shine more brightly.

"Suddenly I knew that it was dusk in my own world above, and that the thickening of the haze was the signal for the awakening of whatever things lived in the pit.

"I scrambled up the sides of one of the burrows. I hid behind a twisted nightmare of stone. Perhaps, I thought, there was a chance of remaining hidden until the blue lightened, the peril passed, and I could escape. There began to grow around me a murmur. It was everywhere—and it grew and grew into a great whispering. I peeped from the side of the stone down into the street.

"I saw lights passing and repassing. More and more lights—they swam out of the circular doorways and they thronged the street. The highest were eight feet above the pave; the lowest perhaps two. They hurried, they sauntered, they bowed, they stopped and whispered. And there was nothing under them!"

"Nothing under them!" breathed Anderson.

"No," he went on. "That was the terrible part of it—there was nothing under them. Yet certainly the lights were living things. They had consciousness, volition—

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what else I did not know. They were nearly two feet across, the largest. Their center was a bright nucleus—red, blue, green. This nucleus faded off gradually into a misty glow that did not end abruptly. It, too, seemed to fade into nothingness—but a nothingness that had under it a—somethingness.

"I strained my eyes trying to grasp this body into which the lights merged and which one could only feel was there, but could not see.

"And all at once I grew rigid. Something cold, and thin like a whip, had touched my face. I turned my head. Close behind were three of the lights. They were a pale blue. They looked at me—if you can imagine lights that are eyes.

"Another whiplash gripped my shoulder. Under the closest light there came a shrill whispering. I shrieked. Abruptly the murmuring in the street ceased.

"I dragged my eyes from the pale-blue globe that held them and looked out; the lights in the streets were rising by myriads to the level of where I stood! There they stopped and peered at me. They crowded and jostled as though they were a crowd of curious people on Broadway.

"That was the horrible part of it. I felt a score of lashes touch me—I shrieked again. Then—darkness and a sensation of falling through vast depths.

"When I awoke to consciousness I was again in the great place of the stairway, lying at the foot of the altar. All was silent. There were no lights—only the mottled red glow.

"I jumped to my feet and ran toward the steps. Something jerked me back to my knees. And then I saw that around my waist had been fastened a yellow ring of metal. From it hung a chain, and this chain passed up over the lip of the high ledge.

"I reached into my pockets for my knife to cut through the ring. It was not there! I had been stripped of everything except one of the canteens that I had hung around my neck, and which I suppose they had thought was a part of me.

"I tried to break the ring. It seemed alive. It writhed in my hands and drew itself closer around me!

"I pulled at the chain. It was immovable. There came over me in a flood consciousness of the unseen thing above the altar, and I groveled at the foot of the slab. Think—alone in that place of strange light with the brooding ancient horror above me—a monstrous thing, a thing unthinkable—an unseen thing that poured forth horror—

"After a while I gripped myself. Then I saw beside one of the pillars a yellow bowl filled with a thick, white liquid. I drank it. If it killed I did not care. But its taste was pleasant, and as I drank strength came back to me with a rush. Clearly I was not to be starved. The People of the Pit, whatever they were, had a conception of human needs.

"And now once more the reddish mottled gleam began to deepen. Again outside arose the humming, and through the circle that was the entrance to the temple came streaming the globes. They ranged themselves in ranks until they filled the temple. Their whispering grew into a chant, a cadenced whispering chant that rose and fell, rose and fell, while to its rhythm the globes lifted and sank, lifted and sank.

"All the night the lights came and went; and all that night the chant sounded as they rose and fell. At the last I felt myself only an atom of consciousness in the sea of that whispering; an atom that rose and fell with the bowing globes.

"I tell you that even my heart pulsed in unison with them! And the red glow faded, the lights streamed out; the whispering died. I was again alone, and I knew that again day had begun in my own world.

"I slept. When I awoke I found beside the pillar another bowl of the white liquid. I scrutinized the chain that held me to the altar. I began to rub two of the links together. I did this for hours. When the red began to thicken there was a ridge worn in the links. Hope rushed up within me. There was, then, a chance to escape.

"With the thickening the lights came

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again. All through that night the whispering chant sounded, and the globes rose and fell. The chant seized me. It pulsed through me until every nerve and muscle quivered to it. My lips began to quiver. They strove like a man trying to cry out in a nightmare. And at last they, too, were whispering—whispering the evil chant of the People of the Pit. My body bowed in unison with the lights.

"I was—God forgive me!—in movement and sound, one with these nameless things, while my soul sank back sick with horror, but powerless. And as I whispered I—saw them!

"Saw the things under the lights. Great transparent snail-like bodies—dozens of waving tentacles stretching from them; little round, gaping mouths under luminous, seeing globes. They were like specters of inconceivably monstrous slugs! And as I stared, still bowing and whispering, the dawn came, and they streamed to and through the entrance. They did not crawl or walk—they floated! They floated and were—gone!

"I did not sleep. I worked all that day at my chain. By the thickening of the red I had worn it a sixth round. And all that night, under their spell, I whispered and bowed with the pit people, joining in their chant to the thing that brooded above me!

"TWICE again the red thickened and lessened and the chant held me. And then, on the morning of the fifth day, I broke the worn links. I was free! I ran to the stairway. With eyes closed I rushed up and past the unseen horror behind the altar-ledge and was out upon the bridge. I crossed the span and the ascent of the stairway.

"Can you think what it is to climb straight up the verge of a cleft-world—with hell behind you? Well—worse than hell was behind me, and terror rode me.

"The city of the pit had long been lost in the blue haze before I knew that I could climb no more. My heart beat upon my ears like a sledge. I fell before one of the little caves, feeling that here at last was sanctuary. I crept far back within it and waited for the haze to thicken. Almost at once it did so, and from far below me came a vast and angry murmur. Crouching at the back of the cave, I saw a swift light go shooting up through the blue haze, then die down and break, and as it dimmed and broke I saw myriads of the globes that are the eyes of the pit people swing downward into the abyss. Again and again the light pulsed, and the globes rose and fell with it.

"They are hunting me! They knew I must be somewhere still on the stairway, or, if hiding below, I must some time take to the stairway to escape. The whispering grew louder, more insistent.

"There began to pulse through me a dreadful desire to join in the whispering as I had done in the temple. Something told me that if I did, the sculptured figures could no longer save me; that I would go out and down again into the temple forever! I bit my lips through and through to still them, and all that night the beam shot up through the abyss, the globes

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swung, and the whispering sounded—and I prayed to the power of the caves and the sculptured figures that still had power to guard them."

He paused—his strength was going.

Then almost in a whisper: "I thought, what were the people who had carved them? Why had they built their city around the verge, and why had they set that stairway in the pit? What had they been to the things that dwelt at the bottom, and what use had the things been to them that they should live beside their dwelling-place? That there had been some purpose was certain. No work so prodigious as the stairway would have been undertaken otherwise. But what was the purpose? And why was it that those who had dwelt about the abyss had passed away ages ago and the dwellers in the abyss still lived?"

He looked at us: "I could find no answer. I wonder if even when I am dead I shall know. I doubt it.

"Dawn came as I wondered, and with it—silence. I drank what was left of the liquid in my canteen, crept from the cave, and began to climb again. That afternoon my legs gave out. I tore off my shirt and made from it pads for my knees and coverings for my hands. I crawled upward. I crawled up and up. And again I crept into one of the caves and waited until again the blue thickened, the shaft of light shot through it, and the whispering came.

"But now there was a new note in the whispering. It was no longer threatening. It called and coaxed. It—drew.

"A terror gripped me. There had come upon me a mighty desire to leave the cave and go out where the lights swung; to let them do with me what they pleased, carry me where they wished. The desire grew. It gained fresh impulse with every rise of the beam, until at last I vibrated with the desire as I had vibrated to the chant in the Temple.

"My body was a pendulum. Up would go the beam, and I would swing toward it! Only my soul kept steady. It held me fast to the floor of the cave, and it placed a hand over my lips to still them. And all that night I fought with my body and lips against the spell of the pit people.

"DAWN came. Again I crept from the cave and faced the stairway. I could not rise. My hands were torn and bleeding, my knees an agony. I forced myself upward step by step.

"After a while my hands became numb, the pain left my knees. They deadened. Step by step my will drove my body upward upon them. And time after time I would sink back within myself to oblivion—only to awake again and find that all the time I had been steadily climbing upward.

"And then—only a dream of crawling up infinite stretches of steps—memories of dull horror while hidden within caves, with thousands of lights pulsing without, and whisperings that called and called me—memory of a time when I awoke to find that my body was obeying the call and had carried me half-way out between the guardians of the portals, while thousands of gleaming globes rested in the blue haze and watched me. Glimpses of bitter fights against sleep, and always—a climb up and up along infinite distances of steps that led from a lost Abaddon to a paradise of blue sky and open world!

"At last a consciousness of clear sky close above me, the lip of the pit before me. Memory of passing between the great portals of the pit and of a steady withdrawal from it. Dreams of giant men and strange, peaked crowns and veiled faces who pushed me onward and onward, and held back pulsing globules of light that sought to draw me back to a gulf wherein planets swam between the branches of red trees that had snakes for crowns.

"And then a long, long sleep—how long God alone knows—in a cleft of rocks; an awakening to see far in the north the beam still rising and falling, the lights still hunting, the whispering high above me calling—and the knowledge that no longer had they power to draw me.

"Again crawling on dead arms and legs that moved—that moved—like the Ancient

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Mariner's ship—without volition of mine. And then—your fire—and this—safety."

The crawling man smiled at us for a moment, then quickly fell asleep.

That afternoon we struck camp, and, carrying the crawling man, started back south.

For three days we carried him, and still he slept. And on the third day, still sleeping, he died. We built a great pile of wood and we burned his body, as he had asked. We scattered his ashes about the forest with the ashes of the trees that had consumed him.

It must be a great magic, indeed, that can disentangle those ashes and draw them back in a rushing cloud to the pit he called accursed. I do not think that even the People of the Pit have such a spell. No.

But Anderson and I did not return to the five peaks to see. And if the gold does stream out between the five peaks of the Hand Mountain like putty from a clenched fist—there is may remain for all of us.

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ON SALE JANUARY 15

"I Talked with God"

(Yes, I Did—Actually and Literally)

and, as a result of that little talk with God some ten years ago, a strange new Power came into my life. After 43 years of horrible, sickening, dismal failure, this strange Power brought to me a sense of overwhelming victory, and I have been overcoming every undesirable condition of my life ever since. What a change it was. Now—I have credit at more than one bank, I own a beautiful home, own control of the largest circulating newspaper in my County and a large office building, and my wife and family are amply provided for after I leave for shores unknown. In addition to these material benefits, I have a sweet peace in my life. I am happy as happy can be. No circumstance ever upsets me, for I have learned how to draw upon the invisible God-Law, under any and all circumstances.

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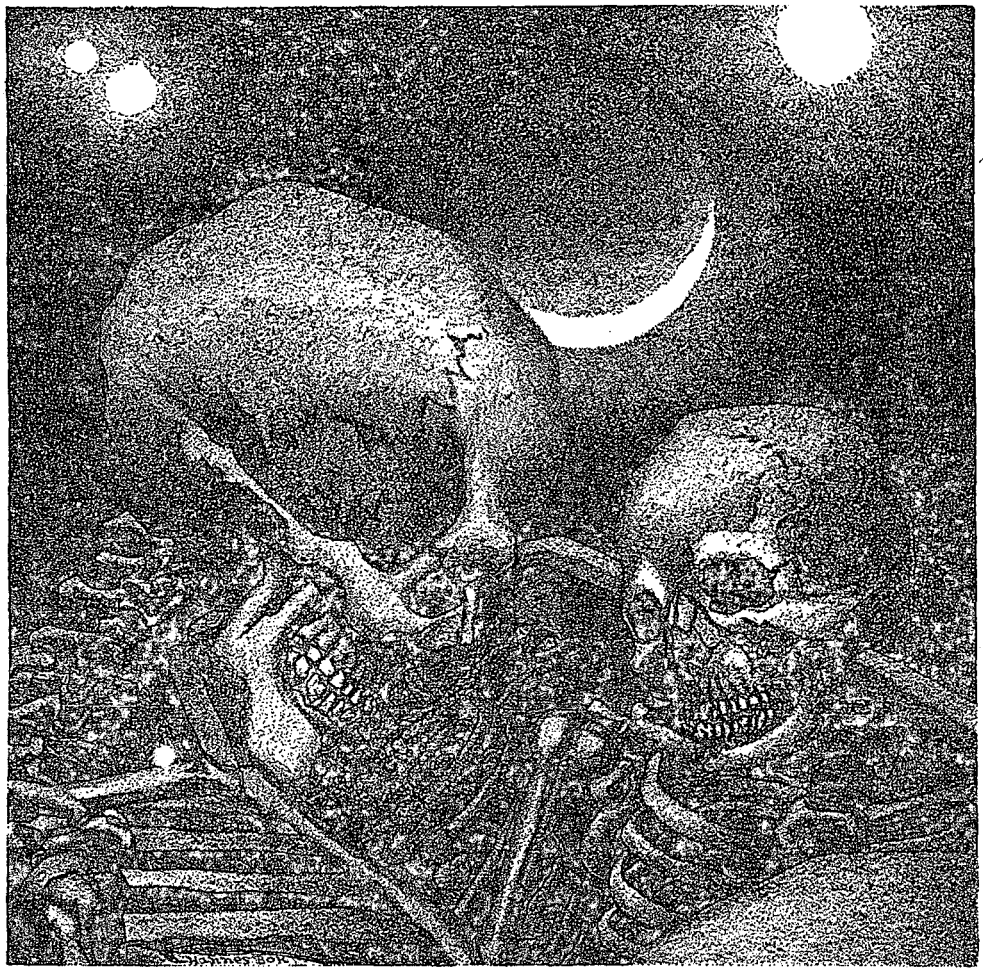

"There was no rigging against the moonlit sky; the signals and other lights hung suspended in thin air . . . the boat had been drifting for months. . . ."

The Ship That Died

By JOHN DEWITT GILBERT

THE voice of the lookout boomed from the crow's nest, "An abandoned cutter about two miles to the sou' sou' east."

The second mate paused in his monotonous pacing of the bridge, lifted his head and scanned the sea off the starboard bow. He could not see the drifting boat against the deep-blue of the noon sea, but binoculars brought it out.

Quietly he ordered the man at the wheel to alter his course and run toward the discovery. Then he sought the captain, playing quoits on the after-deck with the officers of the regiment which the Alaska was bringing home from the Philippines.

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Unexcitedly the captain looked the derelict over. At a distance of a quarter of a mile from the cutter the big transport stopped her engines and lowered a boat. With the second mate in command, the investigator drew away from the mother ship with eight rough sailors rowing easily.

From the deck of the Alaska, the soldiers watched the two small boats draw together; saw the mate board the foundling. Then a tar wig-wagged that they were bringing the find back with them.

The Alaska steamed to meet them. Over the derelict cutter a tarpaulin had been lashed by the second mate to hide its contents. Eager, peering eyes saw nothing but a ship's cutter, badly weather-worn and storm-beaten, hoisted, with trailing moss and green sea-growths, into the waist of the vessel, whence all persons but the captain and his two mates were excluded. Throughout a good part of the afternoon their investigation was continued. The curiosity of the army officers and their wives, to say nothing of the enlisted men, had to go unappeased until the evening meal. Then rapping on the table, the captain rose.

"A few of you may be interested in the boat which we picked up this afternoon," he said. "I think that we can tell the world the last chapter of a strange story. If you wish to hear an account of it all, I will meet you in the after-cabin at seven bells."

The officers of the ship and regiment were there, with their wives and dress uniforms. The captain entered, a great scrapbook under his arm. Dropping this on a table, open to a certain page, he began the story.

"YOU have all heard of the mysterious case of the Carnivordshire, whose disappearance and apparent reappearance has been one of the baffling problems that has thrown a mysticism over the sea. I will tell the story briefly, in case some phases of it have not come to you in the Philippines.

"The tramp Carnivordshire, A & A Company, left Honolulu for San Francisco February 26, 1914. Two days later she was spoken by the Southern Cross, but since that time no word or message has been heard of her from that day to this. She did not report on time and never has really been seen. Her wireless call has never stirred the antennas of ship or shore station. Her crew numbered thirty-five; with the wives of the captain and the two mates, as well as the captain's children and their nurse also aboard.

"The really strange phase of the mystery began six weeks later, when the steamer Sioux, a liner running between Portland and San Francisco, docked at Astoria, and her master, David Johnston, filed this affidavit with the port commissioners."

Picking up his scrapbook, the captain read from a newspaper clipping:

"Eighteen hours after leaving the Golden Gate I went on the bridge. It was about two in the morning. The sea was perfectly calm and the night as fine as I have seen. Taking my position, I caught the lights of a vessel some distance ahead and well off to the west.

"For an hour or more nothing happened. I loitered about the bridge admiring the night, but paying no attention to the other vessel, even though I noted that she was nearing us quite rapidly. Suddenly, however, I realized that she was steaming directly toward us, making much noise. By the beating of her wheel and the thunder of her engines, above the sound of my own boat, I knew her to be a tramp.

"The intruder made no sign or signal as to the course she expected me to take. I waited a moment or two and then gave her my siren—no reply. She was close now. I could see her sidelights plainly. All her ports were shining. Suddenly a word in code lanterns flashed in her rigging. It was Carnivordshire! I ran for the first mate.

"The moon was just setting into the sea. Part of it had already disappeared. I could see that the on-coming vessel would soon obscure it from our view. I shut the Sioux down to half speed and whistled again.

"Because of our slowing speed, the stranger had to alter her course to once more head directly for us. As she did it I became convinced that she was trying to run us down.

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"I started a steady whistle and set my engines hard astern. On came the mad ship; she was crossing in front of the moon, but the moon shone on! Her hull was directly in line with it and still the great disk remained unhid. My vessel was quivering with the strain of her reversed engines and was drawing back with increasing rapidity. The other ship swung also, but I had the start of her and she was unable to swerve quickly enough to run us down.

"She crossed our bows with not a dozen feet between our nose and her sidelights. Still no vessel was there.

"There simply was not a boat in sight, only those lights and the noise of her running. I could see plain water where her hull should have been; could see the waves through her sides. There was no rigging outlined against the moonlit sky. The signals and other lights hung suspended in thin air. No solid thing was near, and yet there was the noise of a ship moving at full speed.

"She passed—but there was no sign. The smooth waves were undisturbed by any wake save our own."

"This statement was made over the affidavit of Captain Johnston, the first mate and several passengers who had witnessed the apparition," explained the master of the transport.

"There are many similar stories here," he added, showing the pages of his book in which were pasted numerous accounts paralleling in general the experience of the Sioux. "All of them tell of the appearance of the lights of a vessel which bore down upon them, refusing to answer their whistles and apparently attempting to ram them. All vessels reporting this phenomena seem to have barely escaped when the skipper reversed his engines. Always the lights were suspended in air; always the noise of the vessel was audible.

"Never was there a ship. Never was the sea disturbed. There were no visible signs of solid matter, but, whenever the incident occurred, there burned, where the rigging should have been, signal lights that spelled Carnivordshire.

"Some of the experiences were different in a way. An operator would catch a distress call—close by. The s.o.s. would come sharp and distinct, so urgent that the skipper would quickly put his boat about and rush to the rescue. Before proceeding far in the given direction, lights would be seen low down upon the water. They would sink closer to the sea as the approaching vessel drew up. The word Carnivordshire would be burning in colored lights from the rigging.

"Even as the rescuer would dash up, lowering her boats as she came, the distressed ship would slide beneath the water without showing any solid thing or showing the least sign of a vortex. There would be no blowing up of decks by compressed air, no shouts or cries. There was always the gradual sinking when help was just at hand. Boats would be lowered and the sea scoured for some sign of wreckage, but no trace of the ship or anything that might have caused the disaster was ever found.

"THESE reports came from all over the ocean," continued the captain. "One ship would put in to Pago-Pago saying that she had encountered the fantom the previous night about ten. Later advices would come from Seattle that a tug had gone on a wild-goose chase in response to an s.o.s. shortly before morning of the same day off the straits of Juan de Fuca. Such reports have been coming in quite regularly down to the present time. This morning we made a real find—the first definite evidence with bearing on the case that has come to hand.

"When the second mate went aboard the cutter which we picked up this morning he found six human skeletons—four women, a small boy and a girl. The bodies had been picked clean by birds. The boat had been drifting for months.

"After the find had been brought aboard we carefully removed the skeletons and made a search of the boat. In a far corner of a food-locker were found some pieces of paper such as are used in wrapping pilot bread. On them was written a record left

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by the occupants. It is this that I have here," and he carefully produced a folded packet of yellow paper. "I will read the account:

" 'There are six of us drifting, we know not where, in a life-boat. We have food and water enough for our immediate needs but, if help does not come at once, we shall die of thirst and starvation.

" 'I am wife of the captain of the Carnivordshire. With me are the wives of the two mates of the same vessel, my two children and their nurse. We were like a large family making the passage a few days ago. Then something happened which I cannot explain and which you will not understand, nor believe. Nevertheless, it is true.

" 'One night while Amos, my husband, and I were reading in our cabin the wireless operator came in to speak with the captain. They talked together for some time and soon went out, leaving me alone. I was never very much interested in the affairs of the ship and so had not noticed what they were saying. In half an hour Amos returned. He was frowning and seemed troubled. I asked if something was wrong.

" ' "Trouble with the wireless instruments," he said. "The things are affected in some way. All parts of them are kind of rotten. Metal and wood seem to be deteriorating or getting punky. I guess they are done for."

" 'I went to bed soon and knew nothing more until I was awakened about three in the morning by the stopping of the engines. I lay listening for some time. Even at that hour men were moving about everywhere—an unusual thing. It was not long before the machinery started again; but now it seemed to be running unevenly, with jerky, uncertain beatings. Finally they died out altogether and the vessel lay idle in the sweeping swell of the sea. I was astonished at the halt, for we had stopped only the day before to repack some piston boxes. The men had gone swimming for an hour or two.

" 'Without waiting for breakfast, I dressed and went on deck. My husband and the chief engineer were talking just outside the companion way as I came up. Not wishing to disturb them, I stopped before reaching the deck. The engineer was saying, "The whole thing is corroding. I can gouge the cylinders with a chisel and the boilers are as soft as cheese—" The men walked away. Something was wrong, that was certain, but I could make nothing of the wild words I had heard. I went on deck.

" 'Up forward the two mates were bending over something on the deck. As I drew near, I saw to my bewilderment a ragged hole gaping in the iron plates. The men were picking at it with their hands. I drew back and grasped the rail in horror. As I leaned my weight against it a great chunk broke out and dropped overboard. I recoiled aghast.

" 'Keeping my eyes on the men about the hole, I backed up to seek the support of the cabin wall. Groping blindly behind me, I touched the iron house. The cold surface of the metal slipped beneath the heel of my hand. I looked and saw that I had rubbed off a great scale of the steel. My foot slumped into something soft. I was standing in a semisolid, muddy pile that had melted down from the wall of the cabin.

" 'I gaped about me, dumfounded, wild-eyed. At the junction of the cabin wall and the deck ran a long crack that narrowed and widened with the strain of the vessel's rising and falling in the steady sea. I hear something break and looked up in time to see one of the stays swinging loose and lashing in the air. I slipped, half-fainting, to the deck. I could dent it with my fist. Where I dug my heel, a long rip was scrubbed in the iron plating. The metal rubbed up in rolls like freshly baked bread. I heard my husband call, "All hands aft."

" 'There was a moment of quiet and the crew began to swarm up from below. I had not noticed their absence. The other women sought me out. They were white and wide-eyed. They also knew. We stood together near the rail.

" 'My husband was not very big, but he was every inch a man and master as he

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stood there, addressing the crew. He looked them over for a minute and then:

" ' "Men, there is, as you know, something decidedly wrong with our vessel. She has been attacked by some mysterious malady which has caused her plates to rot and her engines to sluff off and melt away. You could cut the deck beneath your feet with your fingernail. The trouble started last night with the wireless apparatus. It is an electrolysis or ray of some sort that is corroding wood and metal alike. Now every part of our vessel is decayed. The whole ship is like a mushroom. There is not a solid thing aboard. You could poke your finger through every life-boat. There is no escape."

" ' "There are four women and two children aboard. If there were a way for ten people to leave this vessel, would not these six be among them?"

" ' "Ay-e-e-e-e," growled the men, assuringly.

" ' "You were swimming yesterday, men. The cutter I lowered for you to use is still being towed astern. It is sound and unaffected by the trouble that has rendered our ship useless. In it there is room for ten persons. Four others may be selected from the crew. The two mates and myself waive our chances. Is it all right? You have said that the women might go if there were a chance. May they get in? The matter is in your hands."

" 'The crew moved to the rail, looking at the boat bobbing a few fathoms away. The line to it was already fraying and rotting with the malady. They looked up.

" ' "Ay-e-e-e-e," they promised.

" 'THERE was a general murmur and debate for some moments about the men who were to go in the boat. Amos and the mates had come down and they were bidding us good-by. He was calm and I did not weep. "You have a chance—a chance. God go with you and save your boat from this plague. Good-by—"

" 'He was interrupted by one of the sailors who had stepped up above the others. "Mates," he said, "the line to yonder cutter is about parted. We ain't got no time to argue or cast lots. If we did and some one yelled cheat when he lost out there'd be a big row. These women are goin' aboard and we are goin' to stay here, ain't we?"

" ' "Ay-e-e-e-AYE," first doubtfully and then with conviction.

" 'The speaker went on. "The master of this vessel and mates are married men. They are the ones that should go with their wives. Aren't they to go, too?"

" ' "Ay-e-e."

" 'But Amos rebelled. "I'm captain and I stay with my vessel till she sinks. The wife and children may go, but my duty is here even more than it is with them." The mates said the same.

" 'The boat was drawn up to the side and we were bundled over and told to slide down the rope. The others got safely down, but the rope broke beneath me, throwing me into the water close beside the other craft. The women dragged me aboard. The faces leaning over the rail above wept good-by. My husband shouted, "Push clear of the ship and row away. Don't allow any one to get in when we sink. Good-by. God bless you."

" 'We clumsily rowed our boat off for a few hundred yards and waited the end. The vessel was going fast. Her masts were bent far over, like candles in summer, and her sides were bulging out with the weight of her decks. The rigging was hanging in tatters. Great flat chunks from her sides kept up a continuous splashing as they fell into the water. Long cracks appeared in her plates. Widening and gaping, they spread along her sides.

" 'The men could be seen moving about. The sagging deck slowly forced the boat apart and she flattened out upon the water in a great mass of scum. For an acre or more this loathsome coating of rotted ship smeared the surface. What had been left of the Carnivordshire rose and fell on the rollers like a blotch of mud. No heads forced their way through the mess. We kept close to it till night fell.

" 'Sleep was impossible so we lay there—looking, watching. Suddenly we heard the

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sound of a vessel and looked to see the lights of a ship where we thought the scum was. She was steaming our way. We screamed and yelled. On she came. Down upon us, never swerving to right or left. She was fully lighted. In her rigging were signal lights that one of the women, who knows something of nautical matters, said spelled Carnivordshire.

" 'We stood up and yelled until I thought I should go mad. Still she made no sign of seeing us. She was upon us now. I bowed my head, expecting the blow. The lights passed over us. The vessel slipped through us. Her flares were all about and still there was no sign of any solid thing. The great fantom continued on her way, leaving us undisturbed by wake or swell.

" 'That was yesterday. We have seen no sign of ship or help and are waiting for the end. I can think calmly of my husband's death for I know we will be with him soon. He went like a brave man and as the master of his ship should go. I would rather have him die there than here. The children suffer most, for the sun is very hot.

" 'Another day has passed. We are in actual need of water now. Tomorrow I may not be able to write. Nothing has happened since yesterday. We have not even seen a bird.

" 'All around is blue sea and sky. The sun is maddening. If only a storm would come to kill us before we die of this awful thirst.

" 'The next day. The rest are dead. Kenneth died in my arms but a moment ago. I think I am happy. Last night the lights of the Carnivordshire ran us down again. How pink the midnight is. I am coming, Amos. Wait for me. I am coming with the children. Wait—' "

The captain of the Alaska brushed his sleeve across his eyes, picked up his scrapbook, and hurried from the cabin.

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In FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES for December

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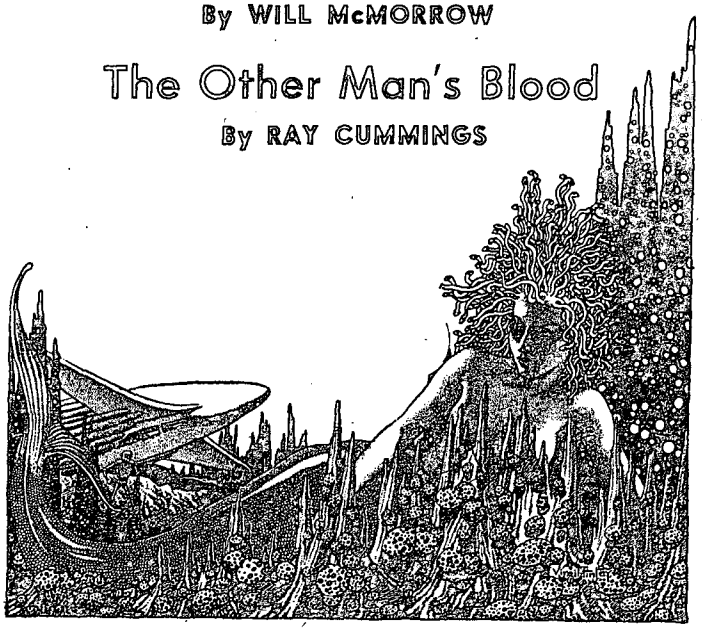
By WILL McMORROW

The Other Man's Blood

By RAY CUMMINGS



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What Do You Think?

Address comments to The Letter Editor, FANTASTIC NOVELS, 280 Broadway, N. Y.

Editor, "Those Fantastic Magazines!"°

A Reply to Nimir

"The Snake Mother" appeared on the stands today. This makes three different formats I have it in, and I'm still enthralled! Of course I have all of Merritt's other stories—including "The Face in the Abyss" in four different forms.

Here is a reply to "The Song of Nimir," by Robert W. Lowndes, in the November F. N.

EARL SINGLETON,
Acting Secretary, The Stranger Club.
Massachusetts Institute of Technology,
The Graduate House,
CAMBRIDGE, MASS.

The Snake Mother

Within her cushioned nest Adana coiled
In dreadful splendor: Lo, the shadowy one,
Proud Nimir, Lord of Evil, was not done
In Yu-Atlanchi; ceaselessly he toiled
To gain a body, till at last he soiled
The soul of Lutan, took his shape to shun
The bleak abyss; and then his way he won
Unto the serpent mother, yet unfoiled!

Above her cushioned nest Adana swayed,
The sistrum in her hand. Her forked tongue
Flicked scarlet lips: "Best, Nimir, had you stayed
Within your dungeon—Nay, *your song is sung;*
You broke the pact: the Lord of Fate has read—
When this our battle ends, you will be dead."

—EARL SINGLETON.

Six Best Fantasies

Beyond any doubt F. F. M. and F. N. are the two best S. F. magazines on the market. Since May when I started reading these two mags. I have read six stories which I shall alway remember and which I consider six of the best I have ever read. These are listed in order of their merit.

"Blind Spot"; "Rebel Soul"; "Face in the Abyss"; "Through the Dragon Glass"; "Darkness and Dawn"; "People of the Golden Atom."

Please give us the sequels to all these stories (if any). And please give us all the stories by Hall, Merritt, England, Flint and Farley, not yet printed in your mag.

The cover by Finlay was superb, but that is to be expected. In it I could almost feel the strength and beauty of Merritt's great story. More Finlay, please!

I would be very happy if you were to publish the "Moon Pool" and "Conquest of the Moon Pool" complete in one issue. This need not be in one of the monthly mags, but it could possibly be a special issue.

There is only one fault I can find with F. F. M. and F. N. and that is there is not enough of either often enough.

DALE WISSER.
1542 O St.,
LINCOLN, NEBR.

P. S.—September 12. I have just finished the "Snake Mother" by A. Merritt and it is even better than "Face in the Abyss." Could you tell me if A. Merritt is still writing stories? Hannes Bok's illustration was very nice and there is no need to mention Finlay's great work.

Bok! Bok! Bok!

WHO WANTS A GREEN BOTTLE? Well, seriously now, I don't know. But, if you asked me, WHO WANTS HANNES BOK IN FANTASTIC NOVELS, I would be one of the first to exclaim, all of we readers would like to see Bok doing more work for your splendid mag in the future.

Bok's illustration for Tod Robbins' yarn, his first artistration for your publication, was more than good—it was positively Brobdingnagian, if I may stutter such a big word and live through it. Bok's rat creature certainly was an interesting thing to look at, rather *cute,* even though I detest that word, but certainly well balanced and nicely drawn.

Can we look forward to more Bokian creations in the near future? Let's hope so. He and Finlay are the only two artists in fantasy fiction today who have managed to capture that *outré* tone that is a necessity to this art form. Why not Bok on a cover? He has a splendid color sense and is a genius of placement and balance.

In case you haven't discovered what this letter is about by now, I guess I just might as well add his name once again. Boy, do I like Hannes Bok's work! Don't lose him! Use him!

RAY BRADBURY,
Editor, FUTURIA FANTASIA.
3054½ W. 12th St.,
LOS ANGELES, CALIF.

° Quote **Spaceways**, Sept. 1940: Sullivan, "Pages from My Diary."

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Merritt Best

Bouquets for you, Editor, in commemoration of your publication FAMOUS FANTASTIC MYSTERIES and her sister magazine, FANTASTIC NOVELS. Both magazines are a feat of publishing skill. The idea of reprinting the old classics of fantasy is one of your best ideas to mature. The illustrations by Paul and Finlay are swell and unbeatable by any other market magazine. I think that Finlay is the logical successor to Gustave Doré. The only thing I wish is for a book containing Poe's complete works with Finlay illustrations. I wonder sometimes why these great publishing houses have neglected Finlay. Now for the stories, from the beginning to the latest:

I think your best author is Merritt. His "Conquest of the Moon Pool" was excellent. Although, I must say, he had done better. Of all his stories, "Ship of Ishtar" takes the cake. When will you reprint that? Have Finlay illustrate it. Austin Hall is your second best author. His "Rebel Soul" is something that might make Merritt look to his laurels. More of Hall, please. "Darkness and Dawn" is indeed a fantasy classic. Print the rest of England's trilogy. Also the sequel of that great story, "Blind Spot." Fisher's novelet was magnificent. "The Radio Man" was good, too. Please vary the themes in your magazine, for instance, print occult, science-fiction, interplanetary, time travel, adventure fantasy, etc. in every issue. "Lord of Death" was not so hot.

For future reprints in both your magazines, here's my list: All the works of Merritt, especially his "Woman of the Wood"; The short stories of Lovecraft; the works of Howard, especially his Conan, John Soloman and King Kull Stories; "Shambleau" and other pieces by C. L. Moore; the Skylark series of E. E. Smith; the great scientification of Campbell, Jr.; the adventure fantasies of Kline; those of Zagat and Leinster and Franklin; "Rebirth" by McClary; the great classics in the Munsey files (I leave that for the other readers to choose from); the stories of Dorothy Quick, Stanley Weinbaum, Fearn, Bloch, Verrill, Blackwood, Jacobi, Seabury Quinn, Owen, Pendarves, Hamilton, Williamson, Vincent, Taine, Wandrei, etc. Practically all these have appeared in other magazines, but please reprint them.

The way you run the magazines is okay with me. Always print complete stories. And may your magazines soon turn monthlies.

VINCENT DEPAUL.

1032 Misericordia,
MANILA, P. I.

The Answers Are Yesses

There appears to be a tendency toward diminution in the size of both F. F. M. and F. N. I can't say I care for that. It isn't possible that you are short of material, for you probably have more than you will ever have the time or space to publish. If you are doing it in order to reduce the price of your publication, I think I speak for the majority of your readers when I say that I would rather pay more and get more.

Perhaps it is merely an indication that you hope to go monthly with both publications. I hope, I hope, I hope. Why not? You have the stories, the audience, and the vast facilities of Munsey to take care of the mechanical side of the work, what are you waiting for?

I would be in favor of your reprinting "The Moon Pool" and "The Conquest of the Moon Pool" in a single issue, yes. I would also favor the reprinting of "The Radio Man" all together in order to give collectors a chance to get the whole series together. You *are* going to print all the Radio stories aren't you? (Don't you dare say No.)

However, please wait a year or so before you republish material that has already appeared in your mags. There is too much stuff that we haven't had at all. We could stand more Cummings (The Princess of the Atom, The Fire People, The Man Who Mastered Time, The Sea Girl, Brand New World) and some more Farley (The Radio Planet, The Radio Flyers, The Radio Gun Runners: you don't have to bother about The Radio Menace as far I am concerned. I thought that was very commonplace).

As to A. Merritt, how about "The Dwellers in the Mirage" and the story you mentioned in the May-June, 1940 issue of F. F. M. as being Merritt's own favorite, "The Woman of the Wood"? Can we have that? Also his "Metal Monster."

You see, we have plenty of new material to consider without back tracking at this time.

Please don't forget Otis Adelbert Kline, especially "The Planet of Peril" and "A Swordsman of Mars." I recently got in touch with a number of out-of-print dealers to try to get a copy of the former story but only one of them could supply it and the cost was $2.75 for a used copy. So you would be doing the readers of fantasy a great service if you reprinted a story that is both rare and expensive. Don't forget, "The Planet of Peril," real soon. "Maza of the Moon" is in a more puerile style and reminds me of the boys' books I used to read when I was a little fellow, about Sam and Tom and Dick, etc. Not up to Kline's best at all. Most of your readers would be disappointed with it.

Please let me make a complaint. You change the format of your books too much.

As to illustrations, how about giving J. Allen St. John a shot at a couple of covers? Not that I have any fault to find with Finlay whatsoever.

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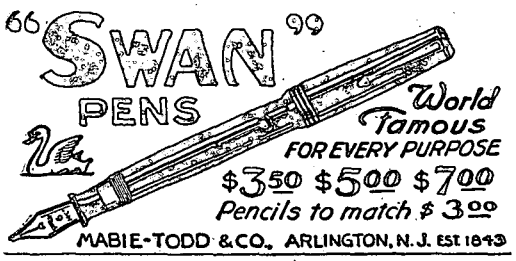

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What do I think of your magazine? It's magnificent! It's stupendous! It is grrrreat . . . ! ! ! With F. F. M., it is unrivalled in the field of "unusual stories" magazines. I have always waited for such a magazine to come off some day and you have done it! And you have made it in such a swell layout, a great format and complete in each issue! Now, I shall be able to bind them and will have a great set of fantastic classics.

For the first issue, you scored a hit! "Blind Spot" was excellent. The second was superb! Besides the swell Cummings novel, you had Merritt. Oh! it was simply great!! More of them. I intend to collect all Merritt's works (print all his works) and then later bind them with the title "Collected Works of A. Merritt." That would indeed be a great treasure to my library.

A word on Virgil Finlay. His work for CMP was the best I have ever come across. I think that he is the only artist who can really interpret those half-realized, dreamy and shadowy images of the occult. You must always make him illustrate Merritt as you print his stories. And, please, always give us Finlay in *full-page* illustrations. Paul is excellent for the science-fiction.

Do not forget to print sequels of the stories you publish which have it. From time to time, as space demands it, always print shorts in F. N. Also do not omit novels from F. F. M. I am completely satisfied with your present policy.

For future reprints, give all of Merritt; the great adventure fantasies of Kline, like his "Prince of Peril", etc., the works of Austin Hall (here's an author that may stand beside Merritt); and besides the vast storehouse in the Munsey files, do not forget to give us the classics written by such swell authors as Robert Howard, H. P. Lovecraft, Keller, Campbell, Jr., Smith, Weinbaum, Moore, Clark Ashton Smith, Blackwood, Warner Munn, Zagat and others whose works had appeared in other magazines.

One last appeal: Please turn monthly, and that goes for F. F. M. too.

Yours for a long life,

FEDERICO V. AZCÁRATE.

P. O. Box 1288,
MANILA, P. I.

F. F. M. and F. N. Best

I have every copy of F. F. M. and F. N. since their publication and think both magazines are the best in the Fantastic Fiction field. I prefer

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novels and novelets, although any short story by A. Merritt would be appreciated.

Any story by Burroughs, Merritt, England, Hall, Flint, Cummings, Farley and Kline are my dish and hope you print all of them. Although I have all books by Merritt and Burroughs, I would like to see Merritt's reprinted because the magazine seems to have a longer version of his stories. Burroughs' books I am quite sure are still available and run close to the magazine version, although I would like to see some of his unpublished stories reprinted.

Don't forget the sequels to the "Atom", "Darkness and Dawn", and the "Radio" Series, also "The Rebel Soul" and "The Blind Spot."

EARL J. W. FORSTER.

2546 N. 17th St.,
MILWAUKEE, WIS.

Readers Want Complete "Moon Pool"

I have just finished reading the November issue of FANTASTIC NOVELS. It has forced me to write again, the second time within a month, when, up until a month ago, I had never before written to a magazine editor.

First of all, I must congratulate Virgil Finlay on that cover illustration for "The Snake Mother." His work has so pleased me that it is now almost as great an attraction to me as the stories themselves.

"The Snake Mother" was superb. It rivals even the "Conquest of the Moon Pool" for excellence. Merritt really turned out a masterpiece when he wrote it. Never before have I gotten so enthusiastic over a story. I am looking forward eagerly to more of Merritt's works.

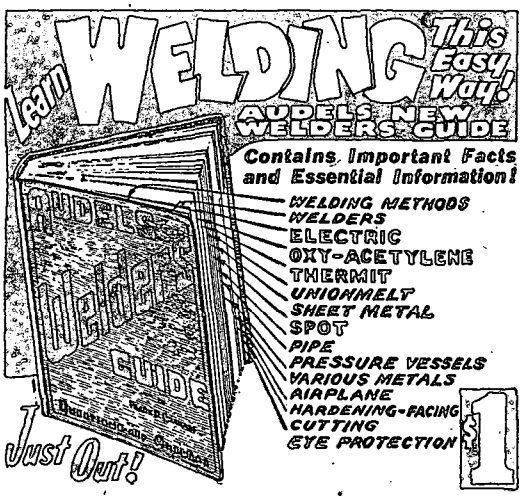
I'll have to confess that when I saw the cut in number of pages and the untrimmed edges, I grumbled a little. However, if the mags remain as they are, they still are head and shoulders over all their rival fantasy mags, even the more expensive ones. Incidentally, the paper used in "our" two mags is of much better grade than that used in any other fantasy mag, no matter what the price. Also, the letters sent by readers, which happen to get printed, are arranged neatly at the end of the books. In other mags, the letters are mixed in with advertisements, thus making a very sloppy-looking page. Our two mags are not only the most interesting; they not only have the best paper; but they also are the neatest and most orderly looking of all. We readers are very lucky to have them. Keep it up.

How has the vote for the complete "Moon Pool" come out?

Until the "Spot of Life" forces me to write again sometime in the future, very soon I hope, I remain

JOHN VAZAKAS.

750A Huntington Ave.,
BOSTON, MASS.



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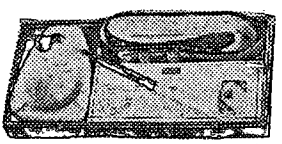

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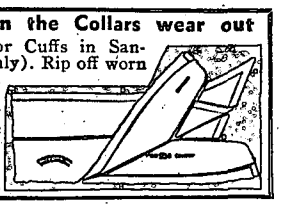

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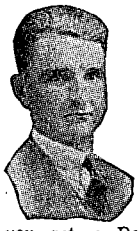

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